THE

SECOND PART

OF THE

LIGHT

OF THE

WORLD.

Being a Continuation of the Conferences which *Antonia Bourignon* had with the deceaſt Mr. *Chriſtian de Cort*; which deſerves to be read, underſtood and conſidered by all who deſire to be ſaved.

Written originally in *French*.

S. *Paul* to the *Romans*, XI. 19, &c.

Be not high minded, but fear: For if God ſpared not the natural Branches (the Jews*) take heed, leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the* Goodneſs *and Severity of God: on them which fell, Severity; but towards thee, Goodneſs, if thou continue in the State wherein his Goodneſs has plac'd you; otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off; and they alſo if they bide not ſtill in Unbelief, ſhall be grafted in: For God is able to graft them in again.*

LONDON,

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE
READER.

Dear Reader,

IT *is more than twelve Years ſince I had the following Conferences in this ſecond Part of the* Light of the World, *and thoſe alſo which ſhall follow in the third Part; which you may afterwards ſee, when it ſhall pleaſe God that they be publiſh'd; and I had no Inclinations to make them publick: For all theſe Queſtions were propos'd to me by the deceaſt* Mr. Chriſtian de Cort, *when he was a Prieſt in the* Roman *Church, Paſtor of the Church of S.* John *in the City of* Mechlin *in* Brabant *and Superiour of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory in that City; who being deſirous to underſtand the Matters relating to his Religion, propos'd to me divers Theological Queſtions, touching the Faith and Manners of Chriſtians who aſpire to the Perfection of their Souls: To which I anſwered according to the Wiſdom and Experience that God gave me. This the deceaſt* de Cort *having exactly noted and ſet down in Writing, he deſign'd to have printed it in the Year* 1667. *But it was afterwards delayed by the Advice of many of his Friends; who knowing the Partiality and Jealouſie of many Divines of the* Roman *Church, were afraid, "that the ſaid*

" de Cort *and I might be put into the Inquiſition for* " *having declar'd too openly the Faults and Corrup-* " *tions which are crept into the* Roman *Church;* " *telling us, that this would be inſupportable to many* " *Zealots of that Religion.*

But the deceaſt de Cort *being very earneſt to make the plain Truth known to the People, reſolved to go to* Holland, *and to print all theſe Conferences there, judging it very neceſſary that they ſhould be communicated to ſincere Perſons, who he thought were periſhing thro' Ignorance, ſaying often* " *I was deceived* " *as to Matters of Faith and Manners: And thro'* " *this Blindneſs I have alſo deceived others, by teach-* " *ing them Shadows for Subſtances; and I'll never be* " *at reſt till I have communicated to them the Truths* " *of God that you have declared to me: And ſo by his Perſuaſions and many importunate Requeſts, I reſolved to go with him to* Holland *to cauſe him to print all theſe Conferences, that we had had together for a long time. I was much averſe to this; becauſe I had not yet printed any of my Writings; and alſo the Matters contain'd in theſe Conferences would greatly ſhock many who are in the* Roman *Church, whom I lov'd tenderly, and deſired not to offend them, eſteeming them my Brethren, and I had never yet convers'd with any, nor had I been in any Place or Country, without the Obedience of the* Roman *Church: And I knew not what ſort of People I might meet with elſewhere: For I imagined I ſhould find there People that were monſtrous, or of a different Shape from thoſe of my own Country, where they repreſent to Children thoſe who are not* Romaniſts, *a Wolves*

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covered with Sheeps Skins, that they may imprint on the tender Hearts of the Children, a mortal Enmity againſt thoſe who in all things have not the ſame Opinions that are profeſs'd in the Roman *Church. This made me afraid to go to* Holland *to cauſe theſe Conferences to be printed.*

But after I had ſeriouſly recommended it to God, I reſolved to go on that Errand: For God made me underſtand, "That 'tis not Religion that ſaves the "Soul, but the Love of God that begets true "Vertue: And that I ought to love all, and to "do good to thoſe of every Religion, and to de-"clare the Truth of God impartially. *And this inward Voice planted in my Soul an Impartiality towards all ſorts of Religions indifferently, without caring to inform my ſelf of what Religion Perſons were, or the Places and Countries to which I was to go, nor with whom I was to ſpeak. This has been my Practice ever ſince, regarding only the Diſpoſition of the Souls with whom I was to treat without conſidering what Religion they profeſs'd, or what Party they were of as to outward Worſhip; ſince in Effect in all Kinds of States, Profeſſions and Religions I've met with Perſons diſpoſed to receive the Truth that comes from God: Yea, ſome of thoſe that are without the* Roman *Church, are more ready to receive it, than they who call themſelves* Roman Catholicks; *tho' this they hold for an Article of Faith, that none can be ſaved out of her Communion.*

This is very ill conceiv'd, ſince God is univerſal, and he's to be found every where by thoſe who ſeek and worſhip him: For he's not fix'd to any material Body.

All Souls who take their Delight in him, are his Spouſes, call them by what Name or Religion you pleaſe: For all theſe different Names or Opinions do not make a Chriſtian; but only the Practice of the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt makes a Chriſtian. And all thoſe who put in Practice the Doctrine of the Goſpel, are Chriſtians and Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, even tho' they were Turks *or Heathens: Of which Profeſſions, I believe ſeveral condemn and judge the nominal and profeſſing Chriſtians: ſince* God has (a) no Reſpect of Perſons; *and will judge all Men according* (b) to their Works. *This the Scripture confirms, ſaying* (c) *by your Works you ſhall be judged, and by your Works you ſhall be condemn'd: And Jeſus Chriſt himſelf taught the Truth of God his Father, to the* Samaritan *Woman, and to many other Nations who were not* Jews, *ſaying to his Apoſtles,* (d) Go, teach all Nations; He that believes, ſhall be ſaved. *He even ate, and converſed with Sinners, to ſee if any of them would receive the Truths of his Father, and put them in Practice; and tho' at firſt he rejected the* Canaanitiſh *Woman as a Dog, yet he ſhew'd her Grace and Mercy by her Converſion and perſevering Humility. For the ſame Reaſon he ſays to Chriſtians,* (e) *that Publicans and Sinners ſhall enter into the Kingdom of God, and the Children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out; which ſtill far-*

(a) Acts 10. 34. (b) Rom. 2. 6. (c) Matth. 12. 37. (d) Mark 16. 15, 16. (e) Matth. 8. 11, 12.

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ther confirms this Truth, That Religion does not ſave a Man; but the Love of God that ſanctifies him.

This made me get over all Humane Reſpects and declare the Truth of the things which were ask'd me by ſo many different Conferences, all about the Roman *Church: For at that time I knew no other Religions; and (with Compaſſion) I looked upon all thoſe who died out of the* Roman *Church as damn'd (as our Divines taught.) So that being ask'd by a* Romiſh *Prieſt, I anſwered plainly to all his Queſtions: Upon which, many took Occaſion to ſay that I had chang'd my Religion, and was become an Enemy of the* Roman *Church; which is not true, ſince being born in it, I will live and die therein, without changing Name or Religion; but only my Manners and Life: And will endeavour to be regenerated in the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt, and to follow and imitate him even to Death, letting Ignorant Men ſay and judge of me as they pleaſe. In the mean time I offer this* LIGHT OF THE WORLD *to all good Souls who ſeek the Truth, and deſire to become true Chriſtians, that they may truly diſcern Reality from Appearance: For this prevails now through all the World, among all ſorts of Sects and Religions, where every one cleaves to the Bark, and does not touch the Wood, fancying that Vertue conſiſts in having a fine Religious Name of that of the* Reformed, the Evangelicks, the Catholicks; *Yea, that, they*

they are perſons guided by the Holy Spirit, of which the Quakers *boaſt, though all theſe ſorts of Names are falſe, and not at all ſuitable to the Life and Manners of thoſe who call themſelves ſo.*

For if they, who are called Reformed, were truly ſo, we would ſee the Reformation in their Life and Manners: Whereas we find they all live according to Fleſh and Blood; which the Scripture ſays, (f) ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. *They are neither reformed in their Moveables nor their Apparel, nor in their Eating or Drinking: They ſeek in all the fineſt and the beſt: They labour and trade diligently, that they may have wherewith to maintain themſelves in Pomp, Exceſs or Plenty as much as they can, without bridling their fleſhly Appetites or their Senſualities in any thing; ſtill coveting more, that they may give it as much Satisfaction as they can, that in this World they may have Eaſe, Honours and Pleaſure.*

Thus they are called Reformed, *though in Effect they will not reform themſelves in the leaſt thing for the Kingdom of Heaven. By which we ſee that they who call themſelves* Reformed *bear a falſe Name, that makes them Hypocrites, and Deceivers of others and of themſelves.*

As thoſe alſo are deceived who call themſelves the Evangelicks: *For in all their Works and*

(f) 1 Cor. 15. 50.

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Practices, there is nothing conformable to the Goſpel, but all directly oppoſite to it: For they do not obſerve ſo much as one Point of the Evangelical Councils: For inſtead of loving voluntary Poverty,; they love the Abundance and Riches of this World unſatiably; and they who ought to be the Guides to thoſe Evangelical Perfections, are the farthest remov'd from them, abandoning their Flocks and Churches to find others that afford them more temporal Profit: They are far from imitating the Apoſtles, who ſaid (g) freely I have received, and freely I give thee; *ſince theſe modern* Evangelicks *give at the greateſt Price, and to him that bids moſt. And therefore they do not juſtly bear the Name of* Evangelicks, *ſince they neither teach nor Practiſe ſo much as one Council of the Goſpel, and have nothing but falſe Names and Parades, that they may appear to be in the Sight of Men what they are not at all in the Sight of God.*

No more than thoſe are Catholicks *who bear the Name, ſince to call one a Catholick, is to ſay, he is a Perſon joyn'd in the Communion of Saints; which theſe are not who call themſelves* Catholicks, *ſince we perceive not any Holineſs in their Lives, but much Vice and Injuſtice, accompanied with Hypocriſie, and ſeeming Vertue, without any Reality or Sanctification. They boaſt that they are* Abraham's *Children, without doing the Works of* Abraham; *or*

(g) Matth. 10. 8.

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that they are Chriſtians, without obſerving the Commands of Chriſt: They content themſelves to be called Catholicks *without conforming their Lives to thoſe who liv'd holily upon the Earth, whoſe Lives and Hiſtories they read without endeavouring to become holy, as they were whoſe Feaſts they ſolemnize, tho' they ſhall never be in their Communion, nor truly Catholicks, till in their Lives they follow their Vertues, and walk in the ſtreight Way that leads to Life. So that this Name of* Catholick, *will condemn them rather than juſtifie them, whereas they preſume to be preferr'd by God to all other Religions; becauſe they are of the moſt Holy and Perfect Religion, according to the Name of* Catholick, *which they bear. This would really be if their Souls were united to Jeſus Chriſt in the Communion of Saints; which only and no other thing, makes a Catholick. By which we ſee that theſe Perſons bear a falſe Name, ſince they preſume of their Salvation, becauſe of the Name* Catholick; *and believe they are in the true Church, out of which they ſay, there is no Salvation.*

This would be true, if the Roman *Church were the only Communion of Saints: But becauſe Souls who are not ſanctified, are not truly* Catholick, *neither will they be ſaved for their Religion, ſince no Religion ſaves, unleſs the Heart be truly Religious, or truly* Catholick.

In which alſo thoſe who are called Quakers, *do greatly deceive themſelves, who through a fooliſh*

fooliſh Imagination, fancy that they are guided by the Holy Spirit as ſoon as they have begun to conform themſelves to this Sect, as if it had more Force to ſanctifie Men, than all the other Religions together, even the moſt perfect, none of which can ſave ſo much as one Soul: For there is nothing that ſaves, but the LOVE OF GOD, *and not a Religion. Every one ought to hold the Religion that ſerves him as a Mean to attain to this* LOVE, *without taking his Religion for the End of his Salvation, if they would not be greatly deceived at Death, thinking to plead their Religion which they imagine to be the beſt, as the* Quakers *believe they have the Holy Spirit, and ſo take the Name of* Quakers, *tho they have him only by Imagination, and falſe Perſuaſions; and the Devil makes them believe they are better than all the reſt of Men; becauſe they have quitted outwardly the groſs Sins of Drunkenneſs, Theft, Lying, and the like, tho' in their Manners they be as vicious as others, preſuming that they have the Holy Spirit, which they have not, living in an Eſteem of themſelves, and a Contempt of others, calling themſelves ſpiritual, while they remain carnal, deſpiſing all the Means of Piety and Devotion to adhere to their own Caprices; and they imagine they are illuminated by the Holy Spirit when they are mov'd only by their own diſorderly Paſſions, which do often precipitate them into fruitleſs Sufferings and Perſecutions, with the Scandal of their Neighbour: So that no body has Ground to believe that he ſhall be ſaved for being*

ing of the Quakers *Opinion, no more than the being of any other Sect or Religion, ſince all theſe Names do nothing to the Salvation of Souls: But to be ſav'd of Neceſſity, we muſt be renewed in the Life of God: And the Scripture ſays,* (h) Obedience is better than Sacrifice.

This ſhews that it's better to be reſigned entirely to the Will of God to be ruled thereby, than to profeſs any Religion how good and holy ſoever we think it to be. Theſe material Bodies do not ſave the Soul, but the Love that it bears to its God will ſave it, and nothing elſe. In which Men deceive themſelves, when they lay the Streſs of their Salvation upon ſome means which they make uſe of to be ſaved. How good ſoever theſe outward things be, they give nothing to the Eſſence of the Soul, which is wholly divine and ſpiritual, and cannot attain to Salvation, if it be not united to its God, who created it for this End; tho' the Blindneſs that Sin has brought upon Man's Spirit, does not often perſuade him that he ſhall be ſaved by other Means: as by going oft to Church, frequenting the Sacraments, hearing many Preachings or ſpiritual Books, or in being able to diſcourſe of theſe things, in giving to the Poor out of his Abundance, in making long Prayers and ſo many other Actions which they call pious; as if God to ſave us, had need of theſe things! Which is a great Deluſion: For it is only our Infirmity and Weakneſs that has need of theſe outward Things: For it is written, (i) that the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip God in Spirit and in Truth, and not in the Temple nor on the Mountain; *That is*

(h) 1 James 15. 22. (i) John 4. 23.

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to ſay, not in material Temples, nor in Mountains of high Speculations; but the Spirit and the Heart muſt be truly poſſeſt with the Love of God, without which no body will be ſaved.

Not that I would reject or deſpiſe all theſe pious Means or good outward Works (as theſe Reformed do blindly reject all ſorts of good Works as evil) ſince theſe good Works may ſerve as effectual Means to attain to this Love of God, ſeeing the covetous Man mortifies his Avarice by giving his Goods to the Poor; and he who cannot pray to God in his Houſe for the Diſtraction of his Affairs, does well to go to Church, that he may be the more recollected; Or he who feels more Compunction and Piety in his Soul, in frequenting the Sacraments; or has more inward and ſaving Light by going to Sermons or reading the Scripture or ſome other ſpiritual Book, he is oblig'd to uſe all the Means which lead him to the Love of God, without deſpiſing the leaſt Mean that may help his Weakneſs in raiſing him to the Love of God; ſince every one is oblig'd to ſeek the Means of his Perfections: I blame only the Abuſe that is made of theſe things, in taking them for the End of Salvation; whereas they are only Means to aſſiſt Humane Weakneſs, which forgets eaſily Eternal and inviſible things if ſhe be not often put in Remembrance of them by outward things: But I blame thoſe who are ſo ignorant as to believe that they ſhall be ſaved for being of ſome Religion, or for uſing the Sacraments, and doing ſome good Work, ſince theſe things do not ſanctifie us, being of themſelves dead Works which cannot give Life to our divine

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Souls; and the Devil himſelf might do all theſe outward things tho' he ſhall never be ſav'd.

I believe indeed ſome captious Spirits will take Occaſion to ſay that I am not truly Catholick in ſpeaking againſt the Uſe of the Sacraments and other Ceremonies of the Roman *Church; but I cannot preſerve my ſelf from the Calumny of partial Perſons, who love their Darkneſs rather than the Light that I offer them from* God, *who has given me his Holy Spirit promis'd by Jeſus Chriſt which teaches me all Truth, ſince Jeſus Chriſt himſelf could not avoid the being calumniated, impriſon'd, perſecuted, and at laſt put to Death by means of the* Jewiſh *Prieſts, who ſaid they were in God's ſtead, and ſate in* Moſes's *Chair, as the Prieſts of all Religions ſay now: While in the mean time they outragiouſly perſecute the Truths which I learn immediately from* God, *without Study, without Meditation, Diſcourſe, Reading or any other Means, which would rather prove a Hindrance to me, than an Illuſtration of the Light of the Holy Spirit who endites to me all things neceſſary for the Salvation of Souls, and gives me alſo his Gift of Strength to bear joyfully thoſe Perſecutions and Outrages, which theſe more than Phariſaical Prieſts exerciſe againſt me: For they will not ſuffer that the Truth of God ſhould come to light by any but themſelves, tho' they've rendred themſelves moſt unworthy of it, becauſe they will not apply themſelves to the Imitation of Jeſus Chriſt, nor to the Sanctification of their Souls; and if theſe be wanting, they ſhall never underſtand the inward Voice of God. 'Twould be a great Vertue in them, if at leaſt they would ſuffer another*

other to underſtand it: But they can't attain to this Chriſtian Vertue of rejoycing in the Good of another. They cry out againſt me as the Jews *cry'd out againſt Jeſus Chriſt:* (l) Away with him, away with him, Crucifie him. *And I believe if the Prieſts had me in their Power, they would gladly cut me off; and would have done it long 'ere now.*

But God ſav'd me from their Power that I might yet farther declare his Truths to good Souls who ſeek and deſire them, which in Obedience to God I'll do, even at the Peril of my Life; ſince Jeſus Chriſt expos'd his to teach me the Way of Salvation: And I entreat the Reader to peruſe with Attention this Second Part *of the* Light of the World, *waiting till the* Third *follows. He ſhall therein find the Wiſdom of the Holy Spirit, the Truth of God and the Light of Truth, which muſt teach all Truth: The Truth of the Impartiality of Chriſtian Charity, and of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and particularly the diſcerning of true Vertue from that which is but apparent, and the Errours crept into Holy Things more clearly than they've ever yet been diſcover'd in the World. Receive it therefore as a Preſent of great Value from her Hand, who loves only the Salvation of your Soul, and continues, Friendly Reader,*

Your very Affectionate in Jeſus Chriſt,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

(l) John 18. 15.

THE SECOND PART OF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

The First Conference.

How the Opinions of the Learned are injurious to God, they being ignorant of his Works. Of God's Presence, and of his Grace. Of the Liberty, Power, and Weakness of Man; and of the State of Infants before the Use of their Reason.

I Said to her, *That never any Body had known so much of the Works of God, and that many Disputes and Questions had been raised in the Church to discover such Secrets.*

She said; Sir, I have often trembled upon the hearing so many Blasphemies as they thunder out against God by such Disputes. One makes God the Author of Evil; another makes him the Complice; another unjust

and partial: ſome attribute to him the Cauſe of Mens Damnation; others the Want of their Salvation: every one judges of the Works of God according to his Fancy, Liking, and Inclinations. The Learned do greatly deceive themſelves, while they will needs comprehend by humane Sentiments, his Divine Works. If any ſimple Woman of a humble Heart, would ſeriouſly conſider the Works that God does in her Interiour, ſhe might give a better Definition of all his Secrets, than all the Doctors of the World wou'd ever do with their Learning. They amuſe themſelves in contending about Words, or ſome Terms that they lay down upon which to found their Diſputes; and thereon they raiſe great Buildings without any ſolid Foundation: and the more they will dive into the Matter, the more they trouble it; becauſe God (*a*) *hides* his Secrets from the great and the *wiſe* of the World, and *reveals* them to Babes and to the ſimple; for he ſays, (*b*) *Except you be converted, and become as little Children, you ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* making appear ſufficiently, that it will not be by Philoſophical Reaſons or Diſputes that we ſhall diſcover the Truth of his Works, but by a dove-like Simplicity.

I ſaid to her; *That many believed that Man has his full Liberty to do evil, but that he is not ſo free to do well.*

She ſaid; Theſe are all Errours; for Man has even more Advantage and Inclination to do good than evil, if he did not (*c*) go *out* of himſelf, by diverting himſelf to hear the Diſcourſes of Mens Inventions; for God having created him for Salvation, did conſequently imprint in him the Inſtinct of doing good, and the Will alſo; becauſe good is always agreeable and lovely. Evil then muſt needs be contracted from without us: for God being the Centre of our Soul, cannot but lead it unto Good; and if it followed its ſelf, its Bent and Inclination, it could not do Evil: becauſe Evil is (*d*) without us, we being led to it either by the Devil, or ſome other Creatures without us, who ſtir our Paſſions, and the Powers of our Soul, to pervert them to the Will of doing evil: otherwiſe 'tis far more eaſie for us to do good than evil. And as the Ray cannot be ſeparated from the Sun, ſo the Soul cannot be ſeparated (*e*) from God,

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(*a*) *Matth.* 11. 25. (*b*) *Matth.* 18. 3. *and* 20. 27. (*c*) *Prov.* 4. 23. (*d*) *Gen.* 4. 7. (*e*) *Pſal.* 13. 3, 5, 7.

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the Fountain of all Good; becauſe it has the ſame Relation to him that the Ray has to the Sun. If our free Will did not put a ſtop to the Rayes of Grace, they would enlighten our Soul continually, and could not ceaſe from illuminating and warming it: But *(f)* Sins and vicious Affections do ſtifle and oppoſe this Light; which, being hindred, cannot any longer ſhine into our Souls; and then, during this Darkneſs they fall from one Precipice into another. The Fault is not that this divine Sun ceaſes to ſhine for one Moment, but that our Sins put a ſtop to it; which, if they were removed, this Divine Sun would as ſuddenly ſhed forth his Rays. We muſt not labour, as we think we ought to obtain the Grace of God; but we muſt only labour to remove *(g)* the Hindrances which we give to it becauſe Grace always offers it ſelf, being inſeparably fix'd in; God, who is the ter of our Soul. He cannot leave it: But our Sins hindring him, keep us from enjoying the Effects of this Grace.

I ſaid to her; *That Man indeed received Benefits from God in his Creation, and his Graces did abound in him: But ſince he fell into Sin, he has loſt theſe Graces, and is become unable to do good.*

She ſaid; Sir, you wrong the Goodneſs of God to ſpeak or believe ſo: For God has not *(h)* withdrawn from Man tho' he fell into Sin: He contains in himſelf all things, and cannot retire from any thing: He is as much the Center of our Souls, ſince Sin, as he was before, and can never go out of any Place, becauſe he comprehends all in himſelf. This being ſo, he does not deny his Graces to any Body: For they are where-ever he is; and being in the Center of our Souls, his Graces conſequently are there with him; but it is our Fault only that they do not there perform Operations. It is true, if our firſt Parents had not ſinned, we had been born in the ſtate of Innoceence, and in coming into the World, had not brought with us a Hindrance to Grace, which we have contracted by our firſt Parents; but by accompliſhing the Penitence that God enjoyn'd them for the ſaid Sins, we enter again into the ſame Grace of our firſt Parents; ſince God treats with us as if we had never offended him, their Sins not being able *(i)* to change the Grace of God, but to ſubject us indeed to Penitence till we arrive at the Uſe of Reaſon; and then, being tranſplanted out of the free Will

(f) Iſa. 59. 2. *(g) Iſa.* 1. 16. 17, 18. *(h) Act.* 17. 27, 28. *(i) Mal.* 3. 6.

and partial: ſome attribute to him the Cauſe of Mens Damnation; others the Want of their Salvation: every one judges of the Works of God according to his Fancy, Liking, and Inclinations. The Learned do greatly deceive themſelves, while they will needs comprehend by humane Sentiments, his Divine Works. If any ſimple Woman of a humble Heart, would ſeriouſly conſider the Works that God does in her Interiour, ſhe might give a better Definition of all his Secrets, than all the Doctors of the World wou'd ever do with their Learning. They amuſe themſelves in contending about Words, or ſome Terms that they lay down upon which to found their Diſputes; and thereon they raiſe great Buildings without any ſolid Foundation: and the more they will dive into the Matter, the more they trouble it; becauſe God (*a*) *hides* his Secrets from the great and the *wiſe* of the World, and *reveals* them to Babes and to the ſimple; for he ſays, (*b*) *Except you be converted, and become as little Children, you ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* making appear ſufficiently, that it will not be by Philoſophical Reaſons or Diſputes that we ſhall diſcover the Truth of his Works, but by a dove-like Simplicity.

I ſaid to her; *That many believed that Man has his full Liberty to do evil, but that he is not ſo free to do well.*

She ſaid; Theſe are all Errours; for Man has even more Advantage and Inclination to do good than evil, if he did not (*c*) go *out* of himſelf, by diverting himſelf to hear the Diſcourſes of Mens Inventions; for God having created him for Salvation, did conſequently imprint in him the Inſtinct of doing good, and the Will alſo; becauſe good is always agreeable and lovely. Evil then muſt needs be contracted from without us: for God being the Centre of our Soul, cannot but lead it unto Good; and if it followed its ſelf, its Bent and Inclination, it could not do Evil: becauſe Evil is (*d*) without us, we being led to it either by the Devil, or ſome other Creatures without us, who ſtir our Paſſions, and the Powers of our Soul, to pervert them to the Will of doing evil: otherwiſe 'tis far more eaſie for us to do good than evil. And as the Ray cannot be ſeparated from the Sun, ſo the Soul cannot be ſeparated (*e*) from God,

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(*a*) *Matth.* 11. 25. (*b*) *Matth.* 18. 3. *and* 20. 27. (*c*) *Prov.* 4. 23. (*d*) *Gen.* 4. 7. (*e*) *Pſal.* 13. 3, 5, 7.

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the Fountain of all Good; becauſe it has the ſame Relation to him that the Ray has to the Sun. If our free Will did not put a ſtop to the Rayes of Grace, they would enlighten our Soul continually, and could not ceaſe from illuminating and warming it: But *(f)* Sins and vicious Affections do ſtifle and oppoſe this Light; which, being hindred, cannot any longer ſhine into our Souls; and then, during this Darkneſs they fall from one Precipice into another. The Fault is not that this divine Sun ceaſes to ſhine for one Moment, but that our Sins put a ſtop to it; which, if they were removed, this Divine Sun would as ſuddenly ſhed forth his Rays. We muſt not labour, as we think we ought to obtain the Grace of God; but we muſt only labour to remove *(g)* the Hindrances which we give to it becauſe Grace always offers it ſelf, being inſeparably fix'd in; God, who is the ter of our Soul. He cannot leave it: But our Sins hindring him, keep us from enjoying the Effects of this Grace.

I ſaid to her; *That Man indeed received Benefits from God in his Creation, and his Graces did abound in him: But ſince he fell into Sin, he has loſt theſe Graces, and is become unable to do good.*

She ſaid; Sir, you wrong the Goodneſs of God to ſpeak or believe ſo: For God has not *(h)* withdrawn from Man tho' he fell into Sin: He contains in himſelf all things, and cannot retire from any thing: He is as much the Center of our Souls, ſince Sin, as he was before, and can never go out of any Place, becauſe he comprehends all in himſelf. This being ſo, he does not deny his Graces to any Body: For they are where-ever he is; and being in the Center of our Souls, his Graces conſequently are there with him; but it is our Fault only that they do not there perform Operations. It is true, if our firſt Parents had not ſinned, we had been born in the ſtate of Innoceence, and in coming into the World, had not brought with us a Hindrance to Grace, which we have contracted by our firſt Parents; but by accompliſhing the Penitence that God enjoyn'd them for the ſaid Sins, we enter again into the ſame Grace of our firſt Parents; ſince God treats with us as if we had never offended him, their Sins not being able *(i)* to change the Grace of God, but to ſubject us indeed to Penitence till we arrive at the Uſe of Reaſon; and then, being tranſplanted out of the free Will

(f) Iſa. 59. 2. *(g) Iſa.* 1. 16. 17, 18. *(h) Act.* 17. 27, 28. *(i) Mal.* 3. 6.

of our Parents we enter into our own. If from that Inſtant, our Will deſires to reunite it ſelf to that of God, we ſhall receive the Effects of his Grace; but the Miſchief is we ſtray to ſee and hear the other vicious Creatures, and commit the Sins that we ſee in others with the Conſent of our own Will; which withdrawing it ſelf from God, puts Obſtacles and Hindrances to his Divine Grace, by which it is impoſſible that we ſhould feel the Effects of it; not that we are ever rendered unable to do good for want of the Grace of God, which *(k)* always waits that we may make uſe of it; but it is becauſe of the ſmall Endeavours that we uſe on our Part to remove that which hinders this Grace that freely offers it ſelf to us; ſo that we cannot ſay truly that we are rendred unable to do good, ſince the Sin of *Adam*, which cannot extend it ſelf farther over us than till we are arriv'd at the Uſe of Reaſon: Then we are reſtored to the liberty of doing Good and Evil, tho' all Good comes from God; he never denies his *(l)* Graces to him who ſeeks and deſires them. For he *(m)* loves us always as the Work of his own Hand, even tho' we be wicked; and if we feel ſome inability to Good, this can never be but thro' the Oppoſition that we will needs make to the Grace of God, who deſires to give it us *(n)* more than we deſire to have it. This is but to flatter our ſelves, to ſay that the Sin of *Adam* has rendred us unable to do good: For 'tis nothing but our perverſe Habits, and *(o)* our Self-will that can give us this Inability: We aſcribe it alſo ſometimes to the Devil thro' the ſame Spirit of Flattery; for the Devil cannot hurt us in any thing without our own Conſent: He can only repreſent evil things to us, our Will being free to follow or reject them; as alſo our natural Inclination cannot commit Evil without the Conſent of our free Will. Sir, Slanders and Blaſphemies ought no longer to be uttered againſt God; for he is All-good, All-juſt and All-true, and can never do any thing that is evil, or unjuſt, or againſt Truth.

I ask'd her, *If Man, after having ſin'd of his own free Will, could indeed recover again, and return of himſelf to God.*

She ſaid; Sir, it ſeems you would uſe the School Terms, which have occaſion'd ſo many unprofitable Diſputes: For, to ſay that Man could recover again of himſelf, would be

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(k) *Iſ.* 30. 19. 2 *Pet.* 3. 1. (l) *Matth.* 7. 7, 11. (m) *Wiſd.* 11. 24, 25. (n) *Luk.* 15. 20, 22, 23. (o) *Deut.* 30. 11. *Mat.* 23. 37.

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the deſiring to ſhew that he had no need of God's Grace, and that his Converſion depended only upon his own Will. This would be an Atheiſm, not to acknowledge that all Grace comes from God: For there is no Good but what comes from him, as being the only Source of all Good: If therefore Man forſakes his Sin, and returns to God, this can only be thro' his Grace: but this Grace is always given and never denied to thoſe who ſeek and deſire it; and even God prevents us before we ask it (*p*). Sir, let us leave theſe Terms of Schoolmen and uſe our own Experience: We know well enough how many Graces God has given us, even while we have offended him, and withdrawn from him; how many times has he call'd us back by Remorſe of Conſcience, by inward Light, by Adverſities, by inward Reproofs, and ſo many other Means which God has made uſe of to draw us to himſelf after that we have forſaken him by our Sins? are not all theſe preventing Graces? If the greateſt Sinner in the World would tell the Truth of what he has experienc'd in himſelf, he would tell to his Confuſion, that God has never been wanting to give him his Grace, but he has ſtrongly reſiſted it: Every one may make this Trial on himſelf; Why ſhould we amuſe our ſelves with ſcholaſtick Terms which are nothing but forg'd Words? We muſt come to the Eſſence of the Thing; that is, that God gives always his Grace to Man (*q*) how wicked ſoever he be; and when this Grace is not operative, it is ſtill thro' the Hindrances which the free Will of Man gives it: For God does not give his Graces imperfectly, but they have leſs or more of Efficacy, according as Man contributes thereto, by his Conſent or Co-operation.

I might anſwer to your Queſtion, *if Man can of himſelf ariſe again from Sin*, by ſaying *yes* and *no*: For he cannot recover himſelf without the Grace of God; but he will obtain it always, even to his laſt Gaſp, (*r*) if he will by his free Will co-operate therewith. That ſo many Sinners cannot get rid of their Sins, the Fault is not, that the Grace of God is not effectually given them, but only that they cleave ſo cloſely to their Sins, that their Will has not effectual Deſires to forſake them. S. *Auſtin* was one of this kind of Sinners; for the Habit of Sin made him believe that it was impoſſible for him to forſake them: But no ſooner was his Will effectual

(*p*) *Prov.* 1. 20, -- 33. (*q*) *Ezech.* 18. 23, — 32. (*r*) *Luk.* 23. 42, 43.

than he abundantly experienc'd the help of God's Grace, which attended him.

I ask'd her, *what ſhe meant by ſaying, that having the Uſe of Reaſon, we paſs out of the free Will of our Parents, and enter into our own?*

She ſaid; Sir, I mean that our Parents hold our Will united to theirs, as long as our Underſtanding is not capable of making full uſe of its Reaſon; in that time they may give us to God or to the Devil by their free Will; becauſe nothing can continue void neither in Grace nor in Nature; it muſt needs ſtill ſubſiſt in ſomething: Now free Will cannot ſubſiſt in an Infant, for it is not yet capable of it; neither can it ſubſiſt in God, ſince he has given it to Man in creating him: He cannot retake what he has once given; for a thing given, is no more his who gives it: Of Neceſſity therefore, this free Will muſt continue united to that of our Parents, till we have arriv'd at the Uſe of Reaſon, and are capable of being able to uſe it our ſelves, as the free Will of all Men remained in that of our firſt Father *Adam*, and this by an equitable Juſtice, becauſe God gave to all Men free Will in the Creation of the firſt: ſo that *Adam* was free to ſave or damn all Men, who died before the Uſe of Reaſon; but having lived till they attain to the Uſe of it, every Man enters into the ſame Liberty of ſaving or damning himſelf into which *Adam* was created; For God has created all Men in *Adam*, and has not ſince taken from or added any thing to them, becauſe he maintains eternally (*s*) what he has once done, never changing it: All his Creatures will be upheld in their kinds to all Eternity, and none of the Works of God ſhall be altered from the State in which he has plac'd and order'd them; ſo that we are born and abide in the Will of our Parents as we were, and abode in the Will of our firſt Father *Adam*; but as ſoon as we attain to the Uſe of Reaſon, we are put in Poſſeſſion of our own free Will.

I ſaid to her; *If it be ſo, that our free Will remains in the Power of our Parents, ſtill we have attained to the Uſe of Reaſon, where can the free Will of Children remain who loſe Father and Mother in their Infancy, or as ſoon as they are born?*

She replied; Thoſe, Sir, abide in the Will which their Parents had in their Conception and Production, or as they

(*s*) *Eccl.* 3. 14.

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leave them when they die. In whatſoever Will they leave their Children when they die, theſe abide in it till they have attained the Uſe of Reaſon; for then they are always put in poſſeſſion of their own Will, whether they have been till then, given to God or to the Devil; they can nevertheleſs chooſe the one and leave the other: But the Child who has been given by his Parents to the Devil, ſhall have much more Difficulty of returning to God, than he who by his Parents has been given to God, becauſe of the Bent to Evil which he has already contracted: He muſt do a far greater Violence to his Nature, than he that has been habituated to Good from his Infancy, becauſe Cuſtom is another Nature; ſo that it is very hard for a Child train'd up in Evil, even till the Uſe of Reaſon, to forſake or change it afterwards: Therefore he who is born of good Parents, fearing God, has great Advantages beyond him who is born of *Mahometans*, *Jews* or evil *Catholicks*, who muſt uſe great Efforts before he overcomes the Evils acquired during his Weakneſs and Childhood. Nevertheleſs, God will never be wanting to give him Grace to do this, if he hath an effectual Deſire and Will for it; for he created Man for no other end but to ſerve him, and he can deny him nothing that is neceſſary for his Salvation: On the contrary, he affords him on his Part all Occaſions and Means of Salvation, even tho' he be born of evil Parents or Sorcerers. They have no more Power over their Children after they are come to the Uſe of their own Reaſon, *(t)* if ſo be they will apply it to know and love God: For they are put in ſuch a State as if they were beginning to be born, except as to the evil or good Habits contracted in their Childhood.

I ſaid to her, *That we ſee two Children ſometimes begotten of the ſame Father and Mother, and yet the one enclined to Good and the other to Evil.*

She ſaid, This may very well be, Sir, becauſe Fathers and Mothers are not always in the State of Grace; ſometimes they fall from it, and afterwards they recover it: The ſame befalls their Children, as long as they have the free Will of theſe Infants in their Power, it is ſtill united to theirs; and while the Father and Mother live, they may put the Souls of their Children being yet in Childhood in Favour or Diſgrace with God: Therefore one may be enclined to Good

(t) Ezec. 18. 14, 17.

and another to Evil, according to the divers Diſpoſitions and Deſires of the Parents, who at one time give one of their Children to God, and at another time give another to the Devil. They may indeed give their Bleſſing to one of theſe Children of the ſame Womb, and their Malediction to another *(u)*, which will operate in their Children ſo long as they are not yet arriv'd at the Uſe of Reaſon; becauſe their free Will is united to that of their Fathers and Mothers. From this Ground has proceeded the uſe of giving a Bleſſing, which Uſe has paſt beyond Father and Mother to the Prieſts, as being the ſpiritual Fathers of Chriſtians, tho' they have not the ſame Power that the natural Fathers have; for they have not co-operated to the Formation of their Body, nor yet very often to the Inſtruction of their Souls, which Fathers and Mothers ought to do under Pain of their own Damnation. We have ſeen Examples enough of the Power which Parents have over their Children; for many have received the Devil in their Body by ſome evil Wiſh of their Fathers. *(x) Jacob* proſpered and was bleſs'd by the bleſſing of his Father, tho' he was not his eldeſt Son. Many Curſes have befallen *(y)* ſome Children for the Sins of their Fathers; and this is juſt; becauſe the free Will of the Child remains always depending on that of the Father, till he hath received full Judgment to be able to uſe it himſelf: Therefore the People cried at the Condemnation of Jeſus Chriſt, *(z) His Blood be upon us and on our Children.*

I ſaid to her, *That it fell out often that good Fathers and Mothers had evil Children; and on the contrary, thoſe who were very evil, have had very good Children.*

She ſaid, This falls out, Sir, when the Children of good Parents have attain'd to the Uſe of Reaſon, being put in Poſſeſſion of their own free Will they forſake the good Inſtructions of their Parents, and contract evil Habits by bad Converſation, or by other Means, which turn them away from their Parents Benediction to follow their own perverſe Will, over which the Father has no more Power, ſince they are emancipated from the Power of their Fathers Will. In like manner, when the Child of an evil Father becomes good and lives well, this is ſtill after he has acquired the Uſe of Reaſon, and that then opening the Eyes of his Underſtand-

(u) Eccleſ. 3. 8. *(x) Gen.* 27. 33. *(y) Exod.* 20. 5. *(z) Mat.* 27. 25.

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ing to conſider his evil Life, he returns to do good by his Liberty and his free Will, in which the Converſation of good Men does greatly help him: But as long as he continu'd in the Power of his Fathers free Will, he muſt of neceſſity be damned or ſaved according to the Diſpoſition of his ſaid Father; and this by an equitable Juſtice, becauſe of the great Sympathy there is between the Father and the Child, as being Fleſh of his Fleſh, and Bone of his Bones: And as the Child who is in its Mothers Belly, receives no other Nouriſhment but that of the Mother, who may by her Food, give Life or Death to her Infant, which is in her Power ſo long as ſhe bears it in her Womb; even ſo is it of the Soul by the great Sympathy there is between the free Will of the Father, and that of his Child; Tho' they be two Souls, they are nevertheleſs dependant upon that which has its full Reaſon; as the Body of the Infant and of the Mother do both of them depend upon the Food which the Mother takes; becauſe ſhe alone is capable of receiving it to make it paſs to her Infant: ſo that theſe two Bodies are reputed but one till the Infant be brought to Light, and become capable of receiving its own Food: Then the Mother is no longer capable of cauſing Life or Death to it, except with what the Child may take of it ſelf. God acts ordinarily as to our Soul, the ſame way that he does as to our Body, at leaſt by Similitude.

I ſaid to her; *That ſhe gave me very profound Thoughts; that never any Body had ſearched ſo far into this Matter; but that all they whoſe Spirits were perplexed about the Reaſons why God damn'd one Infant and ſaved another, did ſtill referr to the Power of God, and to his admirable ſecrets.*

She ſaid; Sir, God will never damn any Body; (*a*) for being the ſource of all Good, He cannot do any Evil; and the Damnation of a Soul is the greateſt Evil of the World. The loſs of all the Wealth, and all the Bodies of Men, together is nothing in compariſon of the Loſs of the Soul of the meaneſt Infant. How durſt you believe that God would do ſo great an Evil as to damn it? I have already told you, Sir, that People do nothing but blaſpheme againſt God on all Occaſions, and this for want of not conſidering ſufficiently his Works which are comprehenſible to our Senſes. If our Underſtanding did apply it ſelf

(*a*) *Wiſdom* 11. 24.

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ſeriouſly to conſider them, they are all ſo clear, ſo juſt and good, that no body can with Reaſon form a Doubt about them. God has created all Men unto Salvation, and none to Damnation, having given to every one Grace ſufficient for his Salvation. If ſome are damned, it is their own Fault, and always with their own free Will. God has Power to ſave One and damn Another, but he will never do it, becauſe his Almighty Power will never depart from his Righteouſneſs and his Goodneſs. We make God, as it were the Complice of our Paſſions, when we ſay, he ſaves one Child and damns another, whom he could not have created but to ſave them, without doing an Evil, and an unjuſt Thing; which the Child might reproach him with who ſhould find it ſelf damn'd before it was capable of committing any Sin. It might ſay with Reaſon, Wherefore haſt thou created me to damn me? It had been better for me to have continued in the Nothing from whence thou haſt taken me, than to have damned me after my Creation. Thoſe who referr to the Almighty Power of God, in the Damnation of an Infant, do tacitely condemn him of Injuſtice; for God ſhould uſe his Almighty Power Unjuſtly: which he cannot do. There cannot be admirable Secrets in that which is not: Nothing is to be admir'd there.

I ſaid to her; *That at leaſt God did permit a Child to be born of an Heathen Parent, or of an evil Chriſtian, or to die before the receiving of Baptiſm.*

She ſaid; God permits this as he permits all other things. On God's Part the Heathen were born to Salvation, as well as good Chriſtians; if they are become Evil or Heatheniſh, it is their own Fault, becauſe he has created all Men in creating of *Adam*, who was certainly choſen by God to Salvation, with all his Poſterity. And having given to him, as to all others, a Liberty and Free-will, he muſt needs permit every one to uſe it according to his Pleaſure; for otherwiſe he would not be juſt to hinder every one from enjoying this Gift of his Free-Will. 'Tis thus that all Evils are committed in the World: Not (*b*) that God permits Evil, but he only permits Men to make uſe of their Free-Will. This is a moſt good thing that God does not withdraw from Man that firſt Liberty which he gave him as

(*b*) *Eccleſ.* 19. 20.

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the greateſt Treaſure which he could ever receive; and if he abuſe it, 'tis for himſelf: For after that God has made all things beautiful and good, he does not change them any more, but lets ſecond Cauſes act: If they be well applied, he permits not a bad Uſe to be made of them; but he cannot hinder it when Man does it of his Free-Will. For Example, God has given to Man the Induſtry to make Knives for the neceſſary Uſes of his Entertainment: This is a good and very convenient thing; but if with the ſame Knife he comes to kill his Brother, can it be ſaid that God has permitted him? no ways, for if he had ask'd permiſſion of God, he would have forbidden him. Even ſo is it as to the Children which are born of Heathen Parents, or Evil Chriſtians, or other Enemies of God. This is not his Permiſſion, but the Wickedneſs of thoſe who are become Enemies of God through their pure Malice, and if they beget Children God will not hinder them, becauſe he has ordain'd this natural Production, which he will never change, for it is very Good in it ſelf, as are all the Works which he has made. Man does all Evil only by the Conſent of his evil Will, and not at all by the Permiſſion or Conſent of God, who cannot but do all Good, without ever permitting Evil, except indirectly, in permitting Man to uſe his Free-Will.

The Second Conference.

Of the State of little Infants, which come from good or evil Parents: And of Baptiſm.

I ſaid to her; *That Infants who die without Baptiſm, and are come of good Chriſtians, are damn'd without their own Conſent, or that of their Parents, who dedicate them to God; together with their own Souls; and ſo they cannot have co-operated to the Damnation of their Children.*

She ſaid; Sir, here are many things to be conſidered, becauſe Parents are often guilty of the Death of their Children through Negligence or Intemperance, and a thouſand other Accidents which fall out as to this Matter. I believe many will be found guilty of Murther before God who

who are not aware of it: But as for Infants who die before Baptiſm without the Fault or Co-operation of their Parents, theſe are certainly ſaved by the Will and Deſire of the Free-Will of their Parents; for God can damn none but thoſe who die in ſin, either actual or original. Now the Children who die before the Uſe of Reaſon, cannot have committed actual Sins, for they are not yet capable of them; and if their Parents are true Chriſtians, they have certainly ſatisfied the Penitence due for the *Sin of Adam.* If their Children partake of their Sins till they have attain'd the Uſe of Reaſon, by the ſame Conſequence, they partake of their Merit and their good Works, becauſe they are ſtill reputed the ſame thing (*a*) being ſympathetically but one Body and one Soul, tho' in Effect they be two, and that ſeparated when the Child comes to the Uſe of Reaſon: So that when a Father and Mother, having begot their Children in the Grace of God, do offer and conſecrate them to him with all the Power of their Free-Will, if they come to die e're they are baptized, they go aſſuredly to enjoy God, as did all the Children who died before Circumciſion in the *Old Law*, as in the *New* thoſe of the firſt Chriſtians, who died e're they were baptized; in which State, a great many died, becauſe then it was not the Cuſtom to baptize young Children, as they do now.

I ask'd her; *If ſhe believed that Infants begotten of truly Catholick-Parents who had offered them to God, dying without Baptiſm, could be ſaved; and that they who died after Baptiſm, having been begotten of wicked Parents, who of their Free-Will had given them to the Devil, were damned.*

She ſaid; Yes, Sir, the firſt are ſaved by the Free-Will of their Parents, and the ſecond (†) are damned by the Will of theirs; becauſe both of them, the Good and the Bad, had the Free-Will of their Children joyn'd to their own, and might ſave and damn the Soul of their Children, as they might ſave and damn their own Soul; becauſe they were inſeparably joyn'd and united together for Good and for Evil: So that Baptiſm cannot ſave the Soul of a Child who is without the Grace of God thro' the Free-Will of his Parents; and the want of this Baptiſm, cannot hinder the Salvation of an Infant, who is in the Grace of God thro' the Free-Will of his Parents, tho' he ſhould die without being baptized: For if this outward Baptiſm be ſo neceſſary to

(*a*) *Pſ.* 112. 2. *Rom.* 11. 16. 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. (†) *Pſ.* 58. 4.

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Salvation, the Primitive Chriſtians, and they who followed them, would have baptized young Infants; and likewiſe all thoſe immediately who came in to be Chriſtians: On the contrary, they kept many in the State of *Catehcumens* for a long Space of Time, during which, they might die, as 'tis to be believed many did. Thoſe who had the Will to follow Jeſus Chriſt perfectly, ſhould they have been damned for not having receiv'd the outward Sign of Baptiſm? No, no, Sir; It does not go ſo before God, as Men make us believe: For a real Deſire only to be a Chriſtian, is capable to ſave us, even tho' we ſhould die without Baptiſm, becauſe God *(b) ſearches the Heart and trys the Reins*, (c) having more Regard to the Baptiſm of Deſire than to that of Water, which is given only to confirm the Will of the Heart of Man; and if we ſhould be ſurprized with Death e're we have made this outward Confirmation, we ſhould not for this, ceaſe to enjoy Eternal Life, and to reign with God in his Glory.

I ſaid to her; *That many Fathers had written of the Neceſſity of being baptized, and that it was taught thro' all the* Roman *Church, that Baptiſm gives Salvation to all thoſe who receive it, that it even cleanſes from all actual Sins, if we have been defiled with them before Baptiſm.*

She ſaid; I know not what the Fathers ſay, nor what is taught by all the *Romaniſts*; but I declare to you what God makes me know and underſtand in the Inward of my Soul. I do not think that all they who are baptiz'd, ſhall be ſav'd; for Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid that *(d) they who believe and are baptiz'd, ſhall be ſaved.* Now Infants newly born are not capable of believing; and if their Parents be wicked, they likwiſe have not Faith to believe in the Name of their Children; how therefore can Baptiſm work Faith, ſince Jeſus Chriſt places it before Baptiſm? Faith *(d)* muſt be the chief Piece for working Salvation; which being wanting, Baptiſm can do nothing: How would you therefore have wicked Children to be ſaved by Baptiſm? For Example: A Sorcereſs being with Child, gives her Soul to the Devil, and alſo that of the Child which ſhe bears, and as ſoon as it comes into the World, it is carried to Baptiſm, and thereafter dies; By what do you think that this Child ſhould be ſaved? If it be not capable of having Faith, and if its Parents have denied

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(b) Jer. 17. 10. *(c)* 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. *(d) Mark* 16. 16. *(e) Eph.* 2. 8. *Heb.* 11. 6.

God,

God, ſhould the Water of Baptiſm alone have more Force than the Free-Will of its Parents, who would give it to the Devil with the Conſent of their Will? Can God reſiſt their Will, after having given them the Power of enjoying this Free-Will, both in regard of their own Salvation, and that of their Children? We ſee that by an exact Juſtice, Subjects bear the Puniſhment of the Sins of their Kings, *(e)* as *David*'s People were chaſtized for the Adultery and Murther which their King had committed; How ſhould not Children bear it with much more Reaſon for the Sins of their Parents *(f)* who have much more of Union and Dependance than the King with his Subjects, who has nothing over them but a voluntary Submiſſion which they yield to him?

I ſaid to her; *That no Chriſtians doubted but that a Man muſt be baptized to be ſaved, and that none could enter into Paradiſe without having received Baptiſm.*

To which She replied; Sir, if this were true, it would be a great Unhappineſs to many good Men who are dead long ago; becauſe many were not baptized aright, thro' the Fault of the Prieſt, who, may be, did not pronounce the Words of Baptiſm, thro' Neglect, or his Mind being carried otherwiſe, or he had not the Intent to baptize, or, which is worſe, if the Prieſt, who baptized was a Sorcerer, as it falls out but too often, and inſtead of baptizing Children in the Name of God, he ſhould give them to the Devil; all theſe Perſons ill baptized, muſt according to your Saying be damned, even tho' they ſhould have lived holily, in caſe this Baptiſm were ſo neceſſary to Salvation. God would be cruel thus to damn Perſons for the Fault of ſome wicked Prieſts, who had no Relation neither to their Souls nor their Bodies: Nevertheleſs it ſhould be in his Power to ſave or damn all thoſe whom he ſhould baptize. Truly, Sir, theſe Sentiments which they have of God, are inſupportable to me, becauſe they contradict his Juſtice and Truth: They muſt be ignorant of him, to believe that he would yield up the Salvation of his People to the Diſpoſal of ſome wicked Man, who adhering to the Devil, might give him all the Souls of thoſe whom he ſhould baptize. If he left us the Free-Will *(g)* to ſave or damn our ſelves, and that he himſelf would not reſerve this Power over us but ſtill leave our Free-Will *(h)* to act, without forcing us

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(e) 2 *Sam.* 18. 19. *and* 20 *Chap. and* 24. *(f)* *Exod.* 20. 5. *Pſ.* 58. 4. *(g)* *Eccleſ.* 15. 14, —— 17. *(h)* *Pſ.* 110. 3.

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to Salvation, nor yet hindring our Damnation, when ſuch is our Will, how ſhould he give to a Man the Power of being able to damn us by an evil Baptiſm? There can be no Appearance of Truth in this; and if it be difficult for you to believe that Parents have the Free-Will of their Children in their Power, how is it not much more uneaſie to you to believe that a Prieſt ſhould have the Power to damn ſo many Perſons thro' his Fault of not having the Intention to baptize them aright? For Parents have contributed to the Formation of the Body, and the Soul of their Children; whereas this Prieſt has never known them: And what Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the young Man in the Goſpel (*i*) *that to be ſaved, he muſt keep the Commandments*, would not be true in caſe Baptiſm were ſo neceſſary, ſeeing he who ſhould keep them without being baptized, could not be ſaved, ſince Salvation depends on Baptiſm.

I was ſo convinc'd by ſuch powerful Reaſonings, that I knew not what to reply: Nevertheleſs, I yet ſaid to her, *that Faith was neceſſary to Salvation with Baptiſm; but that it is ſuppoſed the Faith of the Parents ſupplies that of the Children; and that the Godfather and Godmother are likewiſe taken to confirm it in Name of the Children.*

She ſaid, Sir, it is an ill-contriv'd thing to baptize Children before the Uſe of Reaſon: For they cannot have Faith, and their Parents or Godfathers and Godmothers are alſo ſometimes void of it: They content themſelves with doing the outward Ceremonies without conſidering what is done. Baptiſm is an outward Sign to ſhew that he who is baptized, gives up and conſecrates himſelf to the Service of God, and will live in the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, renouncing the Devil, the World, and its Pomps. This is what he ought to do in the inward of his Soul who deſires to be baptized, and then to come publickly to the Font of Baptiſm to confirm the Vows and Promiſes that he has made to God in his Heart, that they may be publickly known and own'd by the Church: But in the Baptiſm of new born Infants, nothing of this can concurr; For the Infant being weak, has not yet the Will to give it ſelf to the Service of God, or to follow the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, nor yet to renounce the Devil, and the World, and its Pomps: For it has no Senſe nor Underſtanding more than a ſilly Beaſt; and the moſt Part of Parents, who

(*i*) *Matth.* 19. 17.

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ought to ſupply the Defect of the Infant, have not Faith themſelves, and cannot teach them to follow the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, ſince they themſelves will not do it. On the contrary, ſo ſoon as their Children begin to have any little Judgment, they teach them to follow the World and its Pomps, which is very far from minding them, that they have renounced it by Baptiſm: What Effect therefore can this outward Sign have, when nothing is effectuated in the Heart of him who receives it, neither by himſelf nor by his Parents? And when Godfathers and Godmothers ſpeak in the Name of the Infant, they lye: For they ſay that he deſires to be baptized, and the Infant cannot have this Deſire. They ſay, that he renounces the Devil, the World and its Pomps, and as ſoon as theſe outward Ceremonies are ended, they never think more on what they have promiſed in the Child's Name; far leſs do they acquaint him with it when he is grown up, to the end the Child may remember the Promiſe which he made at Baptiſm: For in doing this, they would give a Reproof to themſelves; becauſe neither Father, nor Mother, nor Godfather, nor Godmother, nor any Body at preſent, obſerves the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, tho' all Chriſtians are outwardly baptiz'd. They would count him a Fool or a very Preciſian who ſhould affirm that we are oblig'd to keep and obſerve the Evangelical Life, becauſe it is not any longer in uſe: They would even be aſhamed to renounce the World and its Pomps, becauſe the moſt wiſe and the moſt holy follow the World and its Pomps. The Wiſe ſay that one muſt live civilly, *and maintain himſelf in Honour*; and the Saints at preſent ſay, *that a Man muſt accommodate himſelf to the World, that we cannot make a World by our ſelves.* We ſee the moſt Reformed, Monks ſtudy to pleaſe the World, deſiring to be lov'd and honour'd by it, and would be very ſorry to be hated by the World, as Jeſus Chriſt foretold his Servants (*k*) ſhould be. On the contrary, every one ſeeks to draw the World to himſelf, and to have its Friendſhip, to the end, that having gain'd the Heart, he may likewiſe gain the Purſe. Are not theſe fine Chriſtians in Parade and not in Effect! For they have no ſooner renounc'd in Baptiſm the World and its Pomps, than they think of nothing but to follow and to love it; as if their Promiſe were nothing but a Formality of Words; They do with God, as they would do with a Fool, promiſing him a great many things to pleaſe him,

(*k*) *Joh.* 15. 18, 19.

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without having any Deſire to give him them. Baptiſm ought not to be received, but by him who reſolves in himſelf to conſecrate himſelf to God, and to follow the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, which he ought to know before he be baptized, and reſolve of his own Free-Will that he will follow it, quitting the Maxims of Men, which are all contrary to thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt. *(l)* The Chriſtians of old did ſo: No body was made Chriſtian but they who of their deliberate Will would conſecrate themſelves to God, and follow the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt; but at preſent, they force every one to be baptized before they have the Uſe of Reaſon without knowing what they do, or what they promiſe.

I ſaid to her; *That the Cuſtom of baptizing Children in their Infancy, was Inſtituted on good Grounds, to the end no Chriſtians might die before they were baptized, that all thoſe who died in their Childhood, might aſſuredly be ſaved.*

She ſaid; Sir, I believe rather that the Devil invented this to the end no Chriſtian might be ſaved; as it falls out that very few ſhall be ſaved of thoſe who are baptized in their Infancy; becauſe, when they are outwardly baptized, they believe they are ſufficiently aſſured of their Salvation, (†) which is the greateſt Miſtake in the World: For Baptiſm operates nothing in our Souls, no more than the other Sacraments; but according to their Diſpoſition. How can a Child without Judgment have the Diſpoſitions requiſite for receiving Baptiſm? If their Baptiſm were delayed till they had their full Reaſon, we would certainly yet find true Chriſtians; for they who had no Mind to follow Jeſus Chriſt, would not be baptized, unleſs it were out of Hypocriſie: But at preſent every body thinks himſelf a good Chriſtian, if ſo be he have been outwardly baptized, without conſidering that this Sign gives nothing to our Souls *(m)* if we have not ſuitable Diſpoſitions. If they were not baptized in their Infancy, all thoſe who deſire to be ſaved, would ſtudy to know what is neceſſary for becoming true Chriſtians, and would have no Reſt till they had obtained this Happineſs; but at preſent, every one reſts ſatisfied with this outward Baptiſm, not conſidering that to be Chriſtians *(n)* they muſt follow the Inſtructions of Jeſus Chriſt; without which, it had been better they had never been baptized. It is juſt the ſame as if a Servant ſhould go hire out himſelf to ſerve ſome Prince or Lord, and as ſoon as

(l) *Acts* 2,41, 8, 37. *(†)* *Rom.* 2.28,29 *(m)* *Pet.* 3. 21. *(n)* *Luk.* 14.26, 27, 33.

he had got on his Livery, ſhould quit his Maſter to give himſelf to Robbery, ſetting himſelf to ſteal and rob in the ſame Habit, which would ſerve him the better to catch his Prey: For the Merchant who ſhould ſee him clothed with ſome Prince's or Lord's Livery, would not be aware that he were a Robber, till he ſaw the Effects of it: But if this Robber were ſome Day ſeiz'd by Juſtice he would be more ſeverely puniſh'd for having committed his Thefts and Robberies in ſome Prince's Livery, than if it had been in his own Habit. Even ſo it is when a Perſon is baptized, and immediately abandons himſelf to the Vanities of the World; he deceives God and the World, and renders himſelf ſubject to greater Chaſtiſements than if he were not baptized; becauſe this outward Sign which ſhould ſerve him to obtain Grace, ſerves for his greater Condemnation, as the Liverty ſerves the Robber. We ſee the Devil has found out this Invention to baptize young Children, knowing well that no body when he came to Age would remember what he had done ſo ſoon as he was born, and that he would eaſily baniſh out of Mens Minds the Promiſes which they made in Baptiſm. He has alſo invented the not reiterating of Baptiſm, fearing leaſt peradventure ſome coming to be converted, ſhould come afterwards to receive Baptiſm in a due manner and with requiſite Diſpoſitions. All theſe Devices have been covered with a pious Pretext, *That no Chriſtian ſhould die without having received Baptiſm.* This every one has aſſerted under this Appearance of Piety, which nevertheleſs is founded but upon a falſe Suppoſition of this expreſs Neceſſity of Baptiſm for Salvation; which cannot be true, ſeeing ſo many true Chriſtians died in the Days of Jeſus Chriſt and the Apoſtles in their Non-age, or while they were yet but *Catechumens*, or at the Inſtant of their Converſion. Should not all theſe Perſons be ſaved after they have been in Heart and Affection conſecrated unto God? as alſo thoſe who ſhould yet at preſent live according to his Law in a Country where Baptiſm is not uſed. I would fain know, Sir, if you read any where that the Apoſtles themſelves were baptized; and if you could doubt of their Salvation, tho' they had not been?

The Third Conference.

How the Devil has crept into the Church as Anti-chriſt, and is there maintain'd and authoriz'd.

I Ask'd her, *How the Devil could ſtart theſe things which are decreed by Councils?*

She ſaid; Sir, do you not remember that I have already told you, that the Devil ſlip'd into the Church from the time that Jeſus Chriſt would eſtabliſh it? He had then almoſt all the World at his Devotion, and he needed not great Labour to maintain the World in its Wickedneſs; for it was as it were become natural to it: But how ſoon he ſaw that Jeſus Chriſt came to enlighten the World, and to make known their Sins to them, that he might bring them back to Repentance; The Devil then (*a*) unites all his Force and Power to oppoſe himſelf to this Light, and every way to countermine the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. From that time he got the Name of *Antichriſt*; becauſe he ſets himſelf againſt Chriſt; he has ever ſince continu'd in the Church, that he might deſtroy and ruine it if he could; and from time to time he has gain'd (*b*) ſome who have followed his Suggeſtions and his Malice, whoſe Number has always encreas'd, and he has maintain'd them in Honour and Dignity, making them by his Artifices to ariſe to the higheſt Degrees of Honour; becauſe then his Adherents did render him the more Service. I doubt not but he has made many come to the Office of a Biſhop or other Prelacies, who being conſulted or conven'd together about the Determining of Points relating to our Chriſtianity, may have given Sentiments in favour of the Devil, and prejudicial to the Salvation of Chriſtians. If this were not, Sir, it were impoſſible that the *Roman* Church ſhould have made Decrees ſo contrary to thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt, who never required any thing of any body, but in Love (*c*:) For he ſays (*d*) *if* YOU WOULD *be perfect*, or (*e*) *whoſoever* WILL *fol-*

(*a*) *Eph.* 6. 11. 12. (*b*) *Act.* 20. 29, 30. 2 *Cor.* 13. 14, 15. *Rev.* 2. 3. (*c*) 2 *Cor.* 8. 8, 12. (*d*) *Mat.* 19. 21. (*e*) *Mat.* 16. 24.

low me, let him deny himself, &c. requiring always our *WILL* in all the Vertues that he teaches us; and God himself from the Beginning of the World unto this preſent time, gives us no Command but *to love him*; For all things are nothing but Means to attain to this *Love*, even leaving Men free to obſerve his (*f*) Commands according to their Free-Will (*g*) without Conſtraint; but thoſe of the Councils, do oblige Perſons by force to obſerve their Decrees: So that they who tranſgreſs them, are impriſoned and puniſhed. This is very far from imitating Jeſus Chriſt in his Meekneſs; which, he ſays, we ought (*h*) *to learn of him who is meek and gentle*; whereas theſe uſe Force and Rigour to make their Commands be obſerved: For if a true Chriſtian ſhould not go to Maſs on the Days which they have appointed, they would commit him to Juſtice or the Inquiſition; or if another ſhould not communicate at *Eaſter*, he would be in the ſame Condemnation. Is not this contrary to the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, who demands nothing of any body but what they *WILL* do; requiring always a free Conſent; drawing no body by Force, but ſtill ſaying, (*i*) *he that WILL be my Diſciple?* This rigorous Spirit which is now obſerv'd in the Church, is not conformable to that of Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe (*k*) *Yoke is eaſie, and his Burthen light*; whereas thoſe impoſe troubleſome and grievous Commands, yea, even impoſſible to be obſerved; for he who would live as a true Chriſtian, would have no need of confeſſing once a Year: Nevertheleſs theſe make a Command of it.

I muſt confeſs, Sir, that by the Grace of God, I do not obſerve it; for ſince I yielded my ſelf wholly unto God, and left the Converſation of Men, I have had no Ground to confeſs once a Year: Should I be therefore obliged to go and offend God, that I might have Matter to confeſs at the End of the Year, that I may obſerve the Ordinances of theſe Councils? Theſe are things ſo far from the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt, that I know not how ſome Saints could co-operate to ſuch Reſolutions, except by Force, when the greateſt Part carries it; becauſe the moſt of thoſe Decrees and Commands are more political than divine, and Jeſus Chriſt did not follow theſe Ways. They ought to come from above.

(*f*) *Pſ.* 110. 3. (*g*) *Deut.* 30. 19. *Eccl.* 15. 15. (*h*) *Joh.* 6. 67. (*i*) *Mat.* 11. 29. (*k*) *Mat.* 11. 30.

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The Fourth Conference

Of the Reformation of the Church, of its Councils, Commands and Ordinances.

I Said to her; *That the Councils were held, that they might redreſs the great Abuſes which had crept into the Church; that it was expedient that the Church gave Commands, or otherwiſe every one would live after his own Will.*

She ſaid; Sir, we have the Commandments of God: Had it not been a more perfect way to reform theſe Abuſes, by taking up again only what Jeſus Chriſt had taught us, than to make new Commandments? What (*a*) could be wanting in the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt that other things muſt be added to it? They who would make a good Reformation, ought always to take up again the firſt Inſtitution, and make it only be obſerv'd; For the Holy Spirit can never be miſtaken. (*b*) There is nothing to be mended in nor added to any of his Works; and ſince we can never change a perfect Form, and give it another without ſpoiling the firſt, ſo we cannot form new Commandments without deforming thoſe of God; (*c*) which were compleat and perfect. The great Abuſes which had crept into the Church, would have been redreſs'd better by the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, taking it in the plain Letter, than by ſo many other new Precepts and Ordinances. No body could have lived any longer after his own Mode, when once the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt had been ſet again in its Light; for it regulates all our Actions and Manners: There needed nothing to be added to it in order to revive the true Spirit of Chriſtianity with more Eaſe than all that they would joyn to it ſince; which things have been the Cauſe that many have withdrawn themſelves from the Church to forge Hereſies according to their Fanſies: For they judg'd they were as learn'd as thoſe who would oblige them to their Laws.

(*a*) *Prov.* 30. 5, 6. (*b*) *Eccl.* 3. 14. (*c*) *Pſ.* 19. 7.

I ſaid to her; *I could not comprehend how the Commands of the Church had deformed the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, ſince they were only added as more expreſs Means to make it be well obſerv'd.*

She ſaid; Sir, you do not reach to the Bottom of this Affair: For if you remark it more nearly, you ſhall find direct Contradictions; becauſe theſe Councils would have by force what Jeſus Chriſt would not have but by Love: He never preſs'd any body to follow his Doctrine: On the contrary, when any of his Diſciples left him, he ask'd his Apoſtles (*d*) *if they would leave him alſo* leaving always every one to his own Free-Will; whereas theſe damn the Souls and oppreſs the Bodies of thoſe who will not obey them. They condemn as guilty of mortal Sin all thoſe who will not obſerve their Commandments, and even impriſon their Bodies, baniſh them from their Country; yea, for this they ſometimes put them to death. (*e*) This Spirit of Rigour, does it not deſtroy the Form of that ſweet Goſpel-Law which was ſo perfectly formed by the greateſt Artiſt that ever was or ſhall be, that is, by Jeſus Chriſt who was God and Man? Could there be any thing to be added to the excellent Work of ſuch a Maſter? For there can nothing be added more than taken away, without altering the firſt Form If one take from a Picture the ſweet Draughts of ſome Figure, by adding to it ſome rude ones, the Figure ceaſes to be what it was before: For it is impoſſible that two contrary things ſhould abide together in the ſame Subject. Cou'd Rigour be introduc'd into the Church to make Meekneſs be obſerved there? Theſe Arguments which you lay down, Sir, are without Foundation; but you do it to excuſe what you have once eſpouſed, (as I have done alſo): Notwithſtanding, I cannot cover its Deformities ſo well known to the Eyes of my Saviour, who will very ſhortly make them known to all the World, tho' they ſtrive ſo earneſtly to cover them.

I ſaid to her; *I ſhould be very ſorry if I ſhould aim to cover what diſpleaſed God; but that it was the common Sentiment of all Chriſtians to own and follow as a good thing, what the Church, aſſembled in a Body, had ordain'd and determin'd: For we ſay in our Creed, That we believe in the Holy Catholick Church.*

(*d*) *John* 6. 67. (*e*) *Matth.* 20. 25, 26.

She

She said; Sir, you would have reason if you did not take the Bark for the Wood, and a Humane Church for the Divine. The Holy Church cannot err, as I have told you divers times; because it is the same thing with God. If it be Holy, it is Apostolick: Now the Apostles never commanded the going once a Year to Confession upon Pain of Sin, nor even taught it to any as a Vertue. On the contrary, Jesus Christ said to all those whose Sins he remitted, (*f*) *Go, and sin no more*, This was far from commanding them to go once a Year to Confession: For this would be tacitly or indirectly to command them to sin once a Year; because Confession always supposes Sin; yea, they even teach us that he who receives Absolution without Matter of Sin, commits a Sacrilege, as he does also who gives it. Therefore of Necessity a Man must sin every Year, that he may confess every Year, if he would not commit a Sacrilege. Do you not see, Sir, that the Holy Spirit cannot have instituted such things? This must come from elsewhere, as many other things ordain'd and resolv'd upon by this Church collegiately assembled, tho' it be in use amongst Christians to refer to it and believe it? This can be nothing but a blind Submission: For if we had good Eyes, we would still look (*g*) whether what they command or ordain us, be truly good and conformable to the Gospel, before we follow it. They tell us indeed, that Faith ought to be blind, because it consists in believing what we do not see; But this Faith does not extend so far as to believe what Men say to us, but only what God himself has told us by the Holy Prophets and Apostles, or by Jesus Christ himself, who (*h*) has foretold us a great many things which we do not see, because they are not yet come to pass. In this we must use Faith; because God cannot lye nor fail in making good his Promises: But our Faith does not stand in that which Men say to us or command us: For they themselves are often fallen from the true Faith while they ordain us things contrary thereunto.

I ask'd her, *If she judg'd the Commandments of the Church to be evil things?*

She said; No, Sir, there are divers things which of themselves are good; as fasting in *Lent*, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who fasted forty Days in the Desart; and also the communicating at *Easter* in Memory of the Supper which Je-

(*f*) *Joh.* 5. 14. *and* 8. 11. (*g*) 2 *Cor.* 10. 15. (*h*) *Eph.* 2. 20.

ſus Chriſt made with his Apoſtles at that time; and alſo the Sanctifying the Days dedicated unto God; becauſe he himſelf has commanded it: All theſe things are good in themſelves: But this Conſtraint under Pain of Damnation, or civil or bodily Puniſhment, is moſt evil; becauſe good Works done with regret, cannot pleaſe God, who has no need of our Faſts or Sacrifices; but he regards our Heart and our Will. If this do not concurr to our good Works, (*i*) *he will throw them as Dung into our Faces*: For nothing can pleaſe him but what is offered him by Love: Therefore he ſays in ſo many Places, *He that WILL come after me, or he that WILL follow me.* In all things he requires our affectionate *Will*, and nothing by Force or Violence. This belongs but to cruel Men, who are not of God, ſeeing he (*k*) *is* ALL LOVE, and has given us no other Laws but that of Love; whereas theſe Perſons come with a great many Commandments under Pain of Damnation, and other Temporal Puniſhments. Have you ever read, Sir, that Jeſus Chriſt, his Apoſtles or Diſciples did at any time impriſon any or impoſe Fines on any for not obeying their Ordinances; as theſe Councils do, who deforming this beautiful Law of Meekneſs and Love, do forge troubleſome and conſtraining ones. Does not God deſerve that we ſanctifie the Days which are dedicated to him out of Love? Is not the Deſire that we have to follow and imitate Jeſus Chriſt, powerful enough to make us faſt the *Lent*, and communicate once a Year, without the being oblig'd to it by force? He who does it not out of Love muſt do it with regret, or in Hypocriſie. Were it not better not to be conſtrain'd to it, than to do things ſo troubleſome without meriting any thing, and to die the Devil's Martyr, which this violent and forcing Command does occaſion? For a true Chriſtian has no need of being forc'd; and they who are not ſo, have no need of theſe Commands.

I ſaid; *I believ'd that all our good Works to make them meritorious ought to proceed from the Heart and from our Will; but that God alone can ſearch the Inward; and therefore the Church ordain'd outward things of which ſhe could judge, and that to keep Chriſtians united together, it was needful to give them Laws and make them be obſerved.*

She ſaid; Sir, you grant me by what you ſay, that the Church at preſent is not that which Jeſus Chriſt eſtabliſh-

(*i*) *Mal.* 1. 13, *and* 2. 3. (*k*) 1 *Joh.* 4. 8.

ed

ed, ſince to keep Chriſtians united, ſhe makes Laws that are nothing but civil and temporal ones, reſpecting only outward things; becauſe that which was eſtabliſhed by Jeſus Chriſt, ought not to be upheld, but (*l*) by the Bond of Charity, uniting Chriſtians by a Conformity of their Wills in God; which Unity of Spirit appears ſufficiently by outward Operations; becauſe the Chriſtian who is poſſeſs'd with Charity cannot remain hid: For Charity is always working. There need no other outward Laws to make appear to Men, whether we be true Chriſtians, but *THE LOVE of GOD, and CHARITY FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.* Theſe things are as well outward as inward, and may be judg'd by Men: For to diſcover true Chriſtians it was not needful to ordain them ſo many Precepts under Pain of mortal Sin: For the Doctrine of the Goſpel was but too ſufficient to regulate all their Actions and Manners: Why ſhould they command the hearing of Maſs under the Pain of mortal Sin, ſince Jeſus Chriſt in his Goſpel, has never oblig'd, nor even counſel'd any body to do it, nor yet to confeſs their Sins once a Year? Tho' indeed he ſays, (*m*) *confeſs your Sins one to another*; this is not that one muſt do it once a Year; But when he has ſinned he muſt be humbled and confeſs to his Brother that he is a Sinner; and this rather in publick than in private; that the Humility of declaring our ſelves Sinners, and the Confuſion that we have to be known for ſuch before Men, may give ſatisfactory Puniſhment to our Sins. This is not to ſay that he muſt go and confeſs at certain Times and Days; But when the Sinner deſires to return to God in Heart and Affection, even tho' this ſhould not befal but once in his Life, and at the end of it: He ſhould not ceaſe for this to have the Pardon of his Sins, and to obtain Mercy from God: And if to be ſaved, it were ſo preciſely neceſſary to communicate at *Eaſter*, how could a *Paul*, a *Macarius*, and *Anthony*, and ſo many other holy Hermites have been ſaved, who ended their Lives in the Deſerts of *Ægypt* and *Thebais*, without having ever communicated or heard Maſs? If Jeſus Chriſt had ſpoken of the Euchariſt when he ſaid, (*n*) *Except ye eat the Fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, you ſhall have no Life in you.* This Church which you believe to be holy, would have err'd in holding all theſe

(*l*) *Col.* 3. 14. *Joh.* 13. 34. *and* 15. 10. (*m*) *Jam.* 5. 16. (*n*) *Joh.* 6. 53.

Per-

Perſons for Saints, who never communicated, or at leaſt very ſeldom: For St. *Paul* the Hermite having been for ſo many Years in the Deſert without ſeeing any body, died without receiving the Euchariſt: The *Egyptian Mary* after having been thirty Years without ſeeing any body, received it once only before her Death, with a thouſand ſuch like. What, could theſe be ſaved without obſerving ſo much as one of theſe Commands of the Church? For they ſanctified all the Days of their Life by a continual Union with God, as all true Chriſtians ought to do. It was not needful for them to pitch upon certain Days appointed by the Church, all their Days (none excepted) being ſanctified by continual Prayer. In like manner they could not obſerve the Faſts of *Lent*, and the other times expreſly appointed: For their Life was nothing but a continual Faſt, taking no other Food but what was purely neceſſary, as all true Chriſtians ought to do, who expect to be ſatisfied in the other World, without deſiring to ſatiate themſelves in this. Why ſhould they who have ſtudied to defend this Church, ſay, that People cannot marry in *Lent* or *Advent*? Neither Jeſus Chriſt nor his Apoſtles ever forbad ſuch things, neither did they command the Paying of Tithes: For that great Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſays, that (o) *his Hands gain'd his Bread, and that he was chargeable to no body*: And Jeſus Chriſt bids his Diſciples, tho' (p) *The Workman be worthy of his Reward: take and eat whatſoever is given them; and when they enter into a Place and are not received, that they go from it ſhaking the Duſt off their Feet*; whereas thoſe Councils ordain the Payment of Tithes by Force: So that he who is wanting in it, ſhould be treated as a Criminal. I do not know, Sir, how you can ſay, that all theſe Laws, with ſo obliging them were needful to keep Chriſtians united, by many others, to obſerve them by Force! Becauſe I can ſee nothing in all theſe Ordinances which has the Property of uniting Hearts On the contrary, rather of dividing them,

I ſaid to her; *That in all well order'd Common-wealths, there muſt always be Heads and Superiours, whom we ought to obey, and follow their Laws; or otherwiſe there could be no Order.*

She ſaid; Sir, if you hold the Church for a Civil Common-wealth, you have Reaſon; but if you hold her to be Holy and Spiritual, or the Spouſe of Jeſus Chriſt, you are (q) much in the wrong: For her Head was ſtill her Superiour, and has

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(o) *Act.* 20. 34. 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 9. (p) *Luk.* 10. 7, — 11. (q) *Col.* 2. 20

given

given her ſuch excellent Laws and Rules, that no body can add any thing more perfect to them: Thoſe who would needs make ſome Changes in them, have wholly confounded them; and they who would be their Superiours, have abuſed the Graces of their Liege Lord: Since being appointed his Lieutenants on Earth, to maintain his Ordinances, they have neglected them, and have made others after their own Mode, or for their own Advantage, againſt the Deſigns of their Sovereign Maſter: For by forbidding to marry at certain times, they diſturb the Order that God has ſet from the beginning of the World. Nothing was more holy, nor ever will be, amongſt Men in this World, than *Adam* before his Sin. Nevertheleſs God gave him a Wife, that he might know her for the Generation of Men, and for the perpetual Unity that they ought to have together. If God found it meet that this Marriage ſhould be inſtituted in the Earthly Paradiſe in the moſt holy time that ever was, before *Adam* had ſinn'd, why do theſe Perſons forbid to marry in the times of *Lent* and *Advent*? If it were for the Piety of the Time, they would not give ſo many Diſpenſations to do it after they have forbidden it: For ordinarily we ſee more of the Rich married in this forbidden Time, than in that which is allow'd. It ſeems this Prohibition is but for the Poor, who have not Money enough to obtain theſe Diſpenſations. It is a Pain to me to bend my Mind under theſe Laws: For I find them not at all conformable to thoſe of God: And if we muſt leave the doing good things becauſe Men forbid them, they are then greater Maſters than he.

I ſaid to her; *I did not believe that the Church can forbid good things, or command evil things.*

She ſaid; Sir, conſider narrowly this Prohibition of marrying at a certain time; it cannot at all be good in it ſelf: For they themſelves call Marriage a Sacrament, and they ſay well; for all the Works of God are ſacred and holy: If therefore it be a ſacred thing, why may it not be received in the times of *Lent* or *Advent*, which they reckon alſo to be holy times? May not holy things be done in holy times? This ought to be the fitteſt time for receiving the Sacraments; and Marriage is certainly inſtituted of God from the Beginning of the World, and he did nothing more perfect in Nature than the Inſtitution of Marriage, as he did nothing more perfect in Grace than the Free-Will which he gave to Man; and thoſe who call themſelves the *Church*, would indeed by their Ordinances hinder both the one and the other, bounding

and

and limiting the Will of Man to their Submiſſions, and interdicting them Marriage at certain times limited by them. Jeſus Chriſt (r) went in Perſon to a Marriage with his Mother, and his Diſciples; that he might authorize it by his Preſence: Why then ſhould theſe forbid it for the Piety of the times of *Lent* and *Advent*? as if Marriage was evil and unworthy to be celebrated in pious times! while Marriage has even more of Piety and Sanctity than this *Lent* and *Advent*, which are not authorized but by the Commandment of Men, and Marriage by the Ordinance of God himſelf, and confirmed by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, being at a Marriage in *Cana* of *Galilee*, where he did the firſt Miracle, turning Water into Wine for a Bleſſing to the Married.

I ſaid to her; *That Marriage was truly inſtituted of God, and conſequently good in it ſelf; but that the Cuſtoms of Men had render'd it evil and inſolent, by Exceſs of Feaſts and Luxuries; and that for this Cauſe it was forbidden in holy times.*

She ſaid; If Marriage is become evil thro' the ill Cuſtoms of Men, the Church ought not to permit an evil thing at any other times, no more than in *Lent* and *Advent*: For it is not lawful to do evil things at any time; and if they will forbid good things for the ill Uſe of them, they muſt forbid the Uſe of all the Sacraments; becauſe in general they are all abuſed: And inſtead of forbidding all by the ſame Conſequence that they interdict Marriage, they incite Chriſtians to uſe them more, and even in the moſt holy times: For if they ſend them ſome *Jubilee*, or ſome other Indulgence, it is always on condition that he who would obtain them do confeſs and communicate. In the mean time, no body can be ignorant of the great Abuſe and ill Uſe that is made of the receiving theſe two Sacraments, which are almoſt never received but they commit Sacrilege, we ſee by Experience that Sorcerers do nothing more willingly, than go to Confeſſion and Communion. Baptiſm, as I told you alſo heretofore, is greatly abuſed in the receiving of it, ſince, we ſee, no body lives according to the Promiſe made at Baptiſm. Nevertheleſs, the Church is ſo earneſt to make all Chriſtians receive it, that they will not wait till they have the Uſe of Reaſon to know what they do. If this ill Uſe has given Occaſion to interdict the Sacrament of Marriage at certain times,

(r) *Joh.* 2. 1.

where-

wherefore do they not likewiſe interdict this of Baptiſm until the Child have attain'd the Uſe of Reaſon, that he may uſe it aright? *Confirmation* was a very good thing, that the Child baptized at its Birth might confirm the Promiſes which the Godfathers and Godmothers made in its Name: But they are alſo ſo eager to confirm Children, that ſometimes they will not wait till they be out of their Swadling-Clothes: So that they do no more obſerve the Promiſe of Confirmation than that of Baptiſm; becauſe it is uſual never to think any longer on what they have done, when they received theſe two Sacraments in ſuch Non-Age: They content themſelves with receiving the outward Signs, without caring any farther, either for Faith or for the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. Are not theſe great Abuſes and very ill Uſes of them? Yet they interdict no body, no not for a Day: On the contrary, they preſs and draw all Chriſtians to them with Precipitation, without caring for the Abuſes which are committed in them: So is it likewiſe, as to the Sacrament of *Orders*. How many Prieſts are there who abuſe this Dignity? How many are there of them who lead a debauch'd Life? How many Vagabonds and Sluggards? As ſoon as they are made Prieſts, inſtead of employing their time in the Study of a truly Chriſtian Life, they amuſe themſelves with Plays and Paſtimes, and worldly and vain Recreations. Notwithſtanding of all theſe Abuſes, they interdict no body to become a Prieſt, provided they have ſtudied ſufficiently: On the contrary, they conſecrate them profuſely, and in an exceſſive Number: And whereas Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to his Diſciples, that (s) *they ſhould not be many Maſters*. The Church makes ſo many of them, that one cannot tell which of them to hear or obey; becauſe of ſuch a Diverſity of them, and yet ſhe commands to pay them Tithes, under Pain of Sin.

Judge you, Sir, whether all theſe things are ordained, forbidden, or commanded by the Holy Spirit, who is the Righteous, Good, and True God, always conſtant and unchangeable.

I ſaid to her; *That Jeſus Chriſt himſelf ſaid, that* the Workman is worthy of his Reward, *and that the Church might very well ordain the Paying Tithes to the Prieſts, who being continually occupied in the Service of God, the Inſtruction of the People, and the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, could not gain their own Living.*

(s) *Mat.* 23. 8. *Jam.* 3. 1.

She

She ſaid; Sir, if none pretended to the Tithes but they who are in the Office of a Paſtour, or continually employed in the Service of God, there would be no need to make People pay them: For all good Chriſtians would be well pleas'd to maintain their ſpiritual Fathers, even tho' it were never enjoyn'd them: But this Command extends much farther; for the Tithes muſt be paid to maintain thoſe Prieſts who have no other Charge but their own Perſons, and deſire to rule like ſecular Princes, employing the Wealth of their Tithes in Coaches, Horſes, Trains, Rich Moveables and Sumptuous Buildings. This is ſo much the Faſhion that now-a-days there is ſcarce any body to be ſeen that will be content with what is neceſſary; but they will have all in exceſs and abundance, even they who manage their Wealth, as to their own Perſons, heap it up to enrich their Kinsfolk. Are theſe Goods employed aright in the Service of God? On the contrary, they are ſpent rather in the Devil's Service, who is ſtill glorified by the Pride and Avarice which thoſe Perſons commit in the Abuſe of their Privilege; Becauſe thoſe Goods which are dedicated to the Service of God, whether Tithes or other, are not proper to the Prieſts who poſſeſs them. but to poor Chriſtian Brethren: and they cannot take of them for their own Uſe beyond what is juſtly neceſſary, even tho' they be Paſtors, or have Charges: This cannot warrant them to diſtribute or heap up this Wealth of the Church, except for the Entertainment of their poor Chriſtian Brethren, after the Example of the Apoſtles; who diſtributed to every one according to their Neceſſities: So that no body had need of any thing, even tho' they did not oblige them to give them Goods by Force: For when *Ananias* and *Sapbira* brought a Part of their Wealth to St. *Peter* when they came to be Chriſtians, he ſaid to them, (*t*) your Wealth was your own, and you might have kept it; Wherefore have you lyed to the Holy Ghoſt? To ſhew that they conſtrain'd no Body to give their Goods, leaving every one free to do it who would; whereas they conſtrain Men by Force to give their Goods to the Prieſts, and damn them if they do it not; as if they, by their own Authority could damn them; which they cannot do: For Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid, (*u*) *Judge not, and you ſhall not be judged; condemn not, and you ſhall not be condemned.* For my part, I think, if People did not give ſo many Tithes, they

(*t*) *Act.* 2. 48. 4. 34. (*u*) *Act.* 4. 4. (*x*) *Mat.* 7. 1.

would

would not co-operate to ſo many Sins, and that temporal Wealth has been the Cauſe of the Church's Ruine, and that the Holy Ghoſt has been entirely baniſh'd from her: For ſince ſhe would needs maintain her ſelf by Wealth, Honour, and Authority, the Holy Spirit has been baniſh'd from her, and ſhe governed by a purely Humane and Political Spirit; or, to ſpeak truly, a Diabolical one: Becauſe a Spirit ſimply Humane, could not ordain things contrary to Jeſus Chriſt: For Humane Wickedneſs does not extend farther (*x*) than the Pleaſure, Honour, or Profit of Man; but theſe ordain things wherein they have neither the one nor the other of theſe Advantages, as to cauſe, baptize, and confirm Children in their Infancy, and to faſt on Pain of mortal Sin.

(*x*) 1 *John* 2. 15.

The Fifth Conference.

That all Men ought to labour to ſatisfie the Juſtice of God, by this Penitence.

I ſaid; *That it was at leaſt needful, that ſome Tithes or Goods ſhould be appointed for thoſe who were neceſſary for the Service of God and of Chriſtian People; becauſe they were forbidden to trade, or work to get their Bread.*

She ſaid; Sir, this forbidding the Prieſts to work that they may get their Bread cannot come from God,; becauſe he commanded all Men in *Adam* (*a*) *to gain their Bread with the Sweat of their Body.* Why then ſhould the Prieſts be exempted, who ought to obey him more preciſely than others; becauſe they make a particular Profeſſion of it, and they ought more punctually to be ſubject to the Commandments of God, who having appointed bodily Labour for Penitence, did not exempt the Prieſts, nor his Apoſtles, nor *Joſeph*, nor *Mary*, nor (*b*) even Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who labour'd for his bodily Food. How can they change ſo general an Ordinance, confirmed by

(*a*) *Gen.* 3. 19. (*b*) *Mark* 6. 3.

ſo

ſo many Saints, and by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf? If Labour were evil, God would not have appointed it; for he cannot do evil things; and if it were not good and ſaving, the Saints and the Apoſtles would not have exerciſed it, and Jeſus Chriſt would not have confirm'd it by working himſelf with his Mother and his Father. By what Spirit could they forbid the Prieſts to work, when we hear St. *Paul* ſay, (*c*) *Lo, theſe Hands gain'd my Bread, not being willing to be chargeable to any.* What greater Dignity would the Prieſts pretend to now-a-days, than the Apoſtles had, and Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, that they ſhould be interdicted and forbid Working; Do we not plainly ſee, that theſe are but the Inventions and Commandments of Men for their Eaſe and Commodity? For God never changes his Laws, and can never find that to be evil which he has once found to be good. If Labour be good wherefore ſhould it be forbidden the Prieſts, who ought to be more good and perfect than others? And if Labour were not good, yea, neceſſary for Man, God would never have ordain'd it as a Satisfaction for his Sins.

I ſaid to her; *That Labour was forbidden the Prieſts that thereby more time might be given them for attending on their Studies, and the Perfection of Souls, for fear temporal Labours and Buſineſs ſhould deprive them of the Leiſure to attend upon what is for the Glory of God.*

She ſaid; Sir, theſe Ends have not their Effect: For tho' the Prieſts uſe no bodily Labour, yet notwithſtanding they do not apply themſelves to labour for the Glory of God, but rather to offend him by their Sloth and Idleneſs; which is the Cuſſion whereon the Devil reſts. The ceaſing to labour, defiles them with a double Sin: For notwithſtanding of this, they do not give themſelves to the Study of Perfection: On the contrary, they give way to Temptation, and give the Devil Leiſure to tempt them at his Pleaſure: For wherever he meets with Idleneſs, there (*d*) he enters as into his own Houſe. It were better to command the Prieſts to labour much, that the Devil might get no hold on their Souls; becauſe being diſoccupied from all the Buſineſs and Affairs of the World, they are the better diſpoſed to hearken to the evil Thoughts and Suggeſtions of the Devil: Whereas a Soul that is continually employed, takes no Leiſure to give Ear to the Devil. Do we not ſee ſo great a Number of Prieſts, Monks,

(*c*) *Act.* 20. 34, 35. 1 *Theſ.* 2. 9. (*d*) *Eccl.* 33. 31.

and

and Religious, paſs their Time without doing any thing, and live in Sloth upon the Sweat of the People? They will not be aſhamed to go beg their Bread at the Houſes of poor Labourers and Tradeſmen, who have no other thing but what they can gain by the Sweat of their Face, who ſometimes give them what they've need of themſelves: Nevertheleſs they dare not refuſe them, becauſe they are Church-men: But if they were of the true Church, built by Jeſus Chriſt, *(e)* they would be ſo filled with Charity, that inſtead of asking or receiving Alms of theſe poor Workmen, they would work themſelves to give them the Gain of their Labour. Sir, I look upon what is received by Form of Alms as a Robbery, when we may get our own Bread by our Trade or Labour, or we may have whereupon to live of our own Goods; and I believe 'tis thus *(f)* before God: For it is an unjuſt thing to live on anothers Goods, and to keep our own; or to go beg, when God has given us an healthful Body and ſound Mind that we may labour. But you will ſtill excuſe that Church which you have for ſo long a time look'd upon as holy. It were better to open your Eyes to diſcover the Reality of its Wickedneſs, that you let not your ſelf be deceiv'd to your Perdition.

(e) Acts 20. 35. *(f) Eccl.* 40. 31, 34.

The Sixth Conference.

That the Roman *Church is the Spouſe of Jeſus Chriſt; but that ſhe has falſified her Faith to her lawful Husband.*

I Said to her; *That ſhe gave a deal of Light in divers things for which I did infinitely bleſs God; but I could not deny, it troubled me a little to hear that the* Roman *Church was thus fallen from the Spirit of true Chriſtianity.*

She ſaid; Sir, it is more expedient for the Salvation of your Soul, that you know the Miſery into which the Church has fallen, than if you knew the higheſt Myſteries of the Tri-

nity, or the greateſt Good of all Men together; Becauſe an Evil known, is eaſie to be avoided: But as long as 'tis unknown and hid from us, it is always dangerous, and may greatly hurt us, without our being aware of it. Therefore you ought to give the more Attention, and to apply your Underſtanding more to underſtand and comprehend the Truth, which I tell you of Evil, than to diſcover the Good: For if I told you the Good of all Men, this would only give your ſome little Contentment, or ſenſual Satisfaction; which would add nothing to your Soul: But by knowing the Evil as it is, you may prudently beware of it, that it do not touch or harm you: For all theſe Evils which I ſaid were introduc'd into the Church, even while it was yet Holy, are all covered with Appearances of Good and Piety, and Reaſon; becauſe the Devil could never have gained ſo many Souls as have followed him, but under this Colour or Mantle of Good: And he will yet gain many by their Ignorance of theſe Evils, or by their Unbelief of them: For as long as they take Evil for Good, they will ſtill blindly follow it; and Ignorance will not excuſe the Sin: For God having given us an Underſtanding to comprehend, and a Spirit to diſcern, (a) we ought particularly to apply them to what concerns our Salvation; and when the Truth is ſet before our Eyes, and we will not open them to conſider it, we reſiſt it, and may look for the Condemnation of the Holy Spirit; who ſays, that (b) *Unbelievers ſhall have their Portion with Sorcerers.*

I ſaid to her; *I would not be incredulous, but believe the Truth: But that I felt an inward Oppoſition when it thus overturn'd the Church in the chief Points of Belief, which we owe to it in caſe it were the Holy Church.*

She ſaid; Sir, I believe in the Holy Church; and if I had a thouſand Lives, I would voluntarily expoſe them for its Defence, and would think my ſelf happy to ſpend the laſt Drop of my Blood for ſuch a Cauſe: But when God makes me ſee clearly that She is not Holy, nor that which Jeſus Chriſt eſtabliſhed; but that She is the Whore (c) which is ſpoken of in the *Revelation*. I cannot reſiſt ſo clear Truths, which do not only lie ſecret in my Soul, but God gives me alſo Terms and Words whereby to explain them to you, that you may likwiſe receive the Knowledge of them for your Salvation. For which I have often bleſs'd God, who beſtows on

(a) *Eph.* 5. 15, 17. *Phil.* 1. 9, 10. (b) *Rev.* 21. 8. (c) *Rev.* 17. 1.

us

us ſo many particular Favours, hoping he will do it alſo to others. But I intreat you, doubt not what I tell you of the Miſeries into which Men are fallen: For they are yet greater than I have told you: But perſuade your ſelf aſſuredly, if they were not true, I would not have engag'd my ſelf in Diſcourſes ſo melancholly and diſagreeable to your Sentiments. It would be more pleaſant to me to tell you, that the *Roman* Church is Holy and Perfect; and that thoſe who obey and follow her, are holy. This would recreate both my Heart and yours, and the Hearts of all who could hear it. I ſhould be very light-headed, or void of Underſtanding, to pleaſe my ſelf with things which diſpleaſe all the World, and which oblige me ſtill to hold my Peace, and to conceal my ſelf: Becauſe I know very well, if they ſhould hear me declare thoſe Truths, all the *Romaniſts* would riſe up againſt me, and even the moſt Pious *(d)* would think they made a Sacrifice to God in killing me: For they are ignorant of theſe Truths, and are wedded to their Church, as if ſhe were Holy; knowing no better; becauſe the great Darkneſs that is now throughout the whole World, wherein the Devil has bewitch'd all Minds with Errours, *(e)* they may never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, which every one withſtands, even thinking they do well in it.

I ask'd her, *If I might not ſuſpend my Belief of thoſe things which were contrary to the Church, and believe only what concern'd Vertue and the Love of God?*

She ſaid; Sir, you can never follow Good without departing from Evil; nor adhere perfectly to God without abandoning that which is contrary to him. Have you not remark'd in how many things this *Roman* Church is contrary to the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt? How therefore can you adhere to her, and follow Vertue and the Love of God, ſo long as they are really contrary? Jeſus Chriſt ſays, that *(f) We cannot ſerve two Maſters, without being unfaithful to the one or the other.* You muſt chuſe which you love beſt. Good can never profit you without the Knowledge of Evil; becauſe while you do not know and believe it, you will inſenſibly fall into it; yea, you will often take Evil for Good: For the Evil of this Church is ſtill covered with the Sanctity of pious Reaſons and Arguments: And if Antichriſt did not cover his Wickedneſs with Vertue, he could gain none but the Wick-

(d) Joh. 16. 2. *(e) 2 Theſ.* 2. 10, 11. *(f) Mat.* 6. 24.

ed; but with pious Pretexts, he gains all the Good, who would even make a Scruple not to follow him, as you do, Sir, by your Demand: For if you do believe, and follow Vertue and the Love of God, you will certainly hate all that is contrary thereunto. I think I have already told you enough to let you ſee that the Rules, the Commands, and Ordinances of this Church are not conformable to thoſe of God; who, when he created Man, gave him full Liberty to uſe his Will; whereas thoſe conſtrain it in all Points, and will not only ſubject it by Councils or Advices; but by Force and Violence both bodily and ſpiritual: So that as much as in them lies they deſtroy the Law and the Ordinances of God, to eſtabliſh their own Authority, and to bind the Souls of Chriſtians by ſo many Conſtraints, that 'tis impoſſible for them to ſatisfie them without diſpleaſing God, tho' there were no other thing but the forbidding Prieſts to labour, and making them ſwear never to explain the Holy Scriptures otherwiſe than the ancient Fathers have done.

Do you not ſee, Sir, that all their Laws are nothing but political, and made to maintain their State and Authority? If a Prince or a King, to whom you were ſubject, did become a Tyrant; would you make any Scruple to abandon him when it were in your Power to do it, tho' he were the lawful Son of your King and gracious Father who had preceded him? A Man muſt be his own Enemy, or of an effeminate Heart, if he have not the Courage to leave his own Country, that he may avoid his Tyranny and Severity, and live in Repoſe and Tranquillity.

I ſaid to her: *That this Compariſon was not ſutable, and that I had not found the* Roman *Church Tyrannical.*

She ſaid; Sir, that is becauſe you have always ſubmitted to her Laws, without conſidering whether they were good or evil; and the good Impreſſion they cunningly gave you of her Merits, made her Burthens, tho' very weighty, ſeem light to you. If you have done it in Innocence, God will pardon you, becauſe you perceived no other thing at that time: But at preſent when God ſends you his Divine Light that you may diſcover the Dangers in which you have walk'd amidſt your Darkneſs, do not reſiſt it by Doubts or Scruples, which the Devil will put into your Mind, which have no other Foundation but a Puſillanimity and Softneſs of Heart; which more regards Natural Senſibility, than the Perfection of the Soul, to which if you would attain, you muſt hear what (g) God teaches

(g) 2 *Tim.* 3. 17.

and

and commands you without amuſing your ſelf with ſo many other different things which Men propoſe to you, who are not to be truſted: But God can never deceive you, no more than he can ſuffer any Mutation or Change. He is our lawful King, who has always governed us by Fatherly Affection and Love; And even when Men had offended him thro' Exceſs of Wickedneſs, he ſent them (*h*) his Word cloathed with our Humane Nature, that he might bring us to acknowledge our Fault, that we may return to him by (*i*) Love and not by Force; For the whole Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt is filled with the Light of Counſels and Admonitions, (*k*) not with forc'd Commands or violent Drawings; but gentle and willing, making no Change to the firſt Law of God, but only an Explanation and Illuſtration of it: For Jeſus Chriſt gives us no new Commandment by his Goſpel (*l*) but enlarged the Means by which we may the better obſerve the firſt Commandment of God, declaring to us what we ought to do and to avoid for this End: But this Church which ſucceeded him has indeed chang'd the Government: For inſtead of preſerving the Spirit of a moſt gentle Father, ſhe has taken that of a real Tyrant and wicked one.

I ask'd her; *If ſhe held the* Roman *Church to be that which ſucceeded Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles?*

She ſaid; Yes, Sir, the *Roman* Church was in her Beginning the true Spouſe of Jeſus Chriſt, who had received all the Riches of the Goſpel, the true Word of God, and the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt: But ſince ſhe left that, ſhe has fallen into the Miſery into which *Adam* fell, when he would quit his Dependance on God, and become his Enemy, that he might depend on none but himſelf. *Adam* was the ſame Perſon after his Sin that he was before it; but he was not cloathed with the ſame Graces, nor with the ſame Spirit: For he was aſhamed and confounded, ſubject to all ſorts of Miſeries, bodily and ſpiritual, ignorant, inconſtant, and malicious, with all the other Miſeries under which we now groan. Even ſo is it of the *Roman* Church which was eſtabliſhed with all the Graces of the Holy Spirit; but ſince ſhe would needs depend upon her ſelf and eſtabliſh her own Au-

(*h*) *Prov.* 1. 20. &c. (*i*) *Pſ.* 110. 3. (*k*) 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. 6, 1. *Acts* 20. 31. *Eph.* 4. 1. 2 *Theſ.* 2. 7. *Phil.* 9. 10. 20. 1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 3. 2 *Joh.* 5. (*l*) *Mat.* 5. 17. *Rom.* 3. 3. *Gal* 2. 18. (*m*) 1 *Joh.* 2. 7, 8.

thority; ſhe (*n*) has loſt the Grace of God, with all the (*o*) ſpiritual Gifts with which ſhe was adorned, and has conſented to the (*p*) Suggeſtions of the Devil, as *Adam* did; and has ever ſince (*q*) been eſtranged from God, and encreaſed in (*r*) Wickedneſs, as Man did after Sin. Tho' he was the ſame by Nature, he was not the ſame by Grace: For by his Free-Will, he had denuded himſelf thereof, and cloathed himſelf with Wickedneſs. The ſame has befallen the *Roman* Church. Since ſhe (*s*) changed the Order in which God had ſet her, and would needs (*t*) give Orders and Præcepts to her ſelf, after her own Way, and according to her own Inclinations, ſhe is fallen from the Grace of God, and ſunk into all ſort of Miſeries: Tho' Jeſus Chriſt had choſen her for his true Spouſe, ſhe has falſified her Faith, and the Fidelity ſhe ow'd to her lawful Bridegoom (*u*) to go joyn her ſelf to the Kings of the Earth, whereas Jeſus Chriſt has had ſo carefully warned her (*x*) *That his Kingdom was not of this World*; yet ſhe would needs reign here, and rule over all Earthly Powers; whereas her dear Husband would only ſuffer and be deſpiſed. Thus ſhe has withdrawn from him to her Loſs, to commit Adultery with the Honours, Grandeurs and Riches of the World; and therefore has deſerved to be called THE GREAT WHORE in the *Revelation*.

I ſaid to her; *That Jeſus Chriſt had promiſed to his Church that he would never leave her: asking how this could be, that ſhe was now abandon'd to ſo ſad a State?*

She ſaid; Sir, Jeſus Chriſt will never be wanting in his Promiſe, and has never left his Church, no more than a Man ceaſes to be eſpouſed to a Wife, tho' ſhe falſifie her Faith to him: She continues always his Wife; but he may, both by Divine and Humane Right, repudiate her; and with juſt Reaſon, when ſhe will needs continue in her Whoredoms, he ought in good Conſcience to reject her, and thruſt her away as unworthy of his Company. Even ſo God cannot abandon his true Church: He (*y*) will ſtill uphold her, tho' ſhe were but in one Soul only. She ſhall never periſh: For ſhe ſhall be always united to the Spirit of her Husband, who is

(*n*) *Rom.* 11. 20, 21, 22. (*o*) *Hoſ.* 2. 9. (*p*) 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. (*q*) *Ezec.* 16. 15. (*r*) *Rev.* 18. 5. (*s*) *Jer.* 6. 16, —— 19. *John* 15. 6. (*t*) *Iſa.* 66. 3, 4. (*u*) *Rev.* 17. 2. (*x*) *John* 18. 36. (*y*) *Mat.* 28. 20.

God

God Immortal and Unchangeable, who cannot change nor forſake any thing; but (z) when thoſe Men who repreſent the Church, do falſifie their Faith to him, and will needs take their Pleaſure in worldly Riches, Grandeurs and Honours; they withdraw from and forſake their lawful Husband for this Earthly Traſh; and inſtead of continuing the faithful heavenly Spouſe, they become Harlots, by cleaving to earthly Honours and Pleaſures. By which you may ſee, Sir, that Jeſus Chriſt has not left his Church, but has only repudiated the Harlots, whom he has diſcovered in it, who are not ſuch by Faults or Falls that are caſual, of which ſhe repents, or (a) deſires to amend; but by ſo long inveterate Habits, that ſhe will never change from them but by Death: (b) Therefore there is nothing to be looked for but the Deſtruction of that *BABYLON*, and the Fall of that *GREAT WHORE*, who is ſpoken of in the *Revelation*: For ſhe will never leave her Whoredoms; but by a total Fall and Ruine which ſhall be irrecoverable.

I ask'd her; *How it came that God had not preſerved his Church in the ſame Place where he had eſtabliſhed her, tho' it were but in one Perſon only? That this would be a great Happineſs to find it in the Colledge of* Rome.

She ſaid; Sir, God hath (c) no Reſpect of Perſons, and has no fix'd Place, being univerſally in all things. Even ſo is it of his Church which is united to him; ſhe has no fix'd Place: Therefore ſhe is call'd *Catholick*, or common and univerſal: For ſhe is to be found in all Places indifferently: For otherwiſe, none ſhould have the Liberty to be of the Church, but they who remain'd in this fix'd Place. No, Sir, this cannot be ſo; becauſe God has given *Liberty* to all Men in the World, without having limited them to any particular Nation or Country, but to all in general. The Church conſequently may be as well among the *Jews*, *Turks* and *Heathens*, as among the Church of *Rome*: For ſhe does not conſiſt but of Souls who poſſeſs the Law of God (d) or the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, which is all the ſame thing; becauſe this Doctrine is no other thing but the Explication of the proper Means for obſerving aright this Law: So that he who among the *Heathens* ſhould live in an entire Dependance upon God, having his Will conformable to him in all things: Such a

(z) 2 *Tim.* 2. 12, 13. (a) *Rev.* 2. 21. (b) *Rev.* 17. *and* 18 (c) *Acts* 10. 34. (d) *John* 8. 31.

Perſon would be the Church, even tho' he knew no other Precept or Doctrine: Becauſe all that is written in the Law of *Moſes*, and even in the Goſpel, are no other thing but Means to attain to this Dependance upon and Conformity to the Will of God; So that he who is in this, needs no other Command or Precept to be aſſured of Eternal Bliſs; becauſe all is comprehended and contain'd in this (e) Dependance upon God. All other things are but for enlarging and explaining, wherein this Dependance on God conſiſts. Therefore the Goſpel ſays (f) *deny your ſelves*; to make us underſtand that as long as we live to our ſelves, we are not reſigned to God: For if we rejoyce in Proſperity, and are grieved in Adverſity, it is a Sign that we are not yet reſigned to God, but that we live to our own Deſires and Wills, not to thoſe of God, who will never permit any thing to befall us but what is good and wholeſome. But when we live to our ſelves, we will have this and that, according to our own Judgments, which are blind as to Eternal Things. For this Cauſe Jeſus Chriſt has taken the Pains to teach us ſo many divers things, that he may make us know what hinders us from coming to this Dependance on God, and alſo what makes it eaſie to us: But if we find this Dependance without theſe Means, we have fulfilled the whole Law, and are the *Church*.

I ſaid to her; *That we hold in the* Roman *Church that out of it there is no Salvation.*

She replied; And I doubt, Sir, if one can be ſaved in it, ſince ſhe is not governed by the Spirit of God, how can ſhe guide any to Salvation? If the Devil ſit in her Throne, is it to be believed that he will ſave us? His Malice encreaſes as his Authority augments. I cannot believe that one truly Chriſtian wholly reſigned to the Will of God, can remain in the College of *Rome*: For they would not ſuffer a Spirit ſo contrary to that which rules them. Theſe Reproofs would be inſupportable to them. God himſelf could not preſerve his Church among them, tho' it were but in one Perſon only. They would certainly deſtroy it, and that without Delay. If they teach that none can be ſaved out of their Dependance, it is becauſe they would fain rule over the World, and be as great as God; as the Devil had this Ambition ſince his Creation, and retained it hitherto with a great

(e) *Prov* 3. 5, 6. (f) *Matth.* 16. 24.

deal

deal of Succeſs; becauſe he holds at preſent almoſt all Men under his Authority: For to ſay that there is no Salvation out of the Dominion of *Rome*, is to contradict the Goſpel. For the Apoſtle having told Jeſus Chriſt that ſome taught the Goſpel, who notwithſtanding, did not follow Jeſus Chriſt nor his Diſciples, he ſays to them, (*g*) *Let them alone; for they who are not againſt us, are with us.* Should the Pope be a greater Judge to condemn thoſe who obſerv'd the Law of God, becauſe they did not depend on him? This could not be true, even tho' the *Roman* Church were as yet guided by the Holy Spirit: She could not notwithſtanding, make void the Salvation of thoſe who did not follow her; ſince Jeſus Chriſt has not done it in his Goſpel; which is their Rule, and that which they ought to follow. The Apoſtles never condemned *John*'s Diſciples, who followed not them, and did otherwiſe than theirs. There was a Complaint indeed that they faſted not as St. *John*'s Diſciples did; (*h*) and Jeſus Chriſt excuſes them. Each Apoſtle had his Diſciples apart; and all the Churches were alſo ſeparate. That of *Peter* was not the Church of *Paul*, or of the other Apoſtles: Every one had his Church and his Diſciple ſeparately; and none of them ſaid that thoſe who did not follow them were damned. It ſufficed that all had the Goſpel for their Rule, without making any Difference, whether one was of *James* or of *Philip*: S. *Paul* even ſeverely (*i*) reproves thoſe who ſaid, *I am of Paul* or *of Apollos*, asking them, *If they were not all of Chriſt who died for them?* But at preſent, they will have none to be ſaved but thoſe who are under one Man only; whereas then all were ſaved who were under Jeſus Chriſt. Have we gotten another God, or rather another Law ſince the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt? that theſe Men will needs damn all thoſe who will not follow this Pope! For my Part, I would rather upon Pain of my own Damnation, aſſure all thoſe of Salvation who ſhall obſerve the Commandments of God in whatſoever Place and Condition they may be: For Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the young Man in the Goſpel (*k*) who ask'd him *What he ſhould do to be ſaved? Keep the Commandments*, without any other thing; becauſe all is comprehended in this. A Man muſt not go by four Ways when he knows one that is ſtreight and ſure. What ever Men would make us to believe, the Truth that is of God, is always the moſt certain.

(*g*) *Luke* 9. 50. (*h*) *Mat.* 9. 14, 15. (*i*) 1 *Cor.* 1. 12. 13. (*k*) *Mat.* 19. 16, 17.

I begg'd

I begg'd, *She would explain to me how God could not preſerve his Church in the College of* Rome, *even tho' it were but one Perſon only, ſeeing he is Almighty.*

She ſaid; Sir, the Almighty Power of God will never extend it ſelf beyond his Righteouſneſs and his Goodneſs. He has given to Man a Free-Will to uſe it at his Pleaſure, by which he has made him partake in the Deity; which is the greateſt good he could ever do to Man: For by this Free-Will he renders him capable of taking his Delights with him; or otherwiſe there would not have been any Correſpondence of God with Man, ſince Likeneſs begets Love, and Love is always bent to love its like. If Man had not had Liberty of uſing his Will, he would not have been like to God in any thing: For a Creature bounded and conſtrain'd, has no relation to an Almighty God. It was neceſſary that the Power of uſing his Free-Will, ſhould be given him that God might take his Delight with that which in ſome manner was like unto himſelf, and nothing could reſemble him but this free Power of his Will. Tho' he had created Man's Soul divine, this had been but a limited Spirit without this Free-Will which muſt certainly concurr to compleat the Delight which God would take with Men: For as a King can take no Contentment in recreating himſelf with a Slave, as he would do with a Queen, who is nearer his Quality; ſo God would make Man in his full Liberty, and capable of uſing his Free-Will fully, that in this Liberty he might be ſome way like to him. This being done, (*m*) he cannot repent of any thing, but lets Man enjoy his Gifts: However he abuſe them, his Righteouſneſs and Conſtancy will not let him withdraw or take from him what he has once given him; but he leaves it him, and will leave it to all Eternity: Whether Man ſave or damn himſelf, Free-Will ſhall never be taken from him; for God is not changeable in his Gifts, no more than in all his Works. This being ſo, (*n*) he cannot hinder the *Romaniſts* from killing any body amongſt them who would be the true Church, without bounding or limiting the Free-Will that they have to do this: But his Goodneſs preventing their Malice, will move his Church (*o*) to withdraw out of their Power, or to hide her ſelf, as Jeſus Chriſt hid himſelf to avoid the *Jews* Tyranny; and by this means he exerciſes his Good-

(*m*) *Rom.* 11. 29. (*n*) *Rev.* 12. 6, 14. 18, 4. (*o*) *John* 12. 39.

neſs

neſs towards his Church, and leaves thoſe Men of ill Will in the Liberty that he has given them, who do only the Miſchiefs that are in their Power, and cannot reach the doing thoſe which the Good by their Light and Foreſight can avoid. 'Tis thus, Sir, that I ſaid, God could not preſerve his Church among theſe *Romaniſts*, becauſe he will never uſe his Power againſt the Juſtice of the Right that he has given them to uſe their Free-Will. Sir, we ought always to take things in their Source, or elſe we would utter Calumnies againſt God, either in ſaying that he is not Powerful to hinder Evil, nor Almighty to preſerve his own, or not juſt in not letting Cauſes work according to the Order in which he has eſtabliſhed them, which would be ſo many Blaſphemies: Becauſe God can never do any Evil, for he is the Source of all Good: He cannot permit Injuſtice, for he is perfect Righteouſneſs: And likewiſe he cannot againſt Promiſe, take from him the Free-Will that he has once given him: But he does all his Works in ſuch Perfection, that (*q*) Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs, Faith, and Truth concurr in all, in an excellent Harmony, which raviſhes the Underſtanding of him who conſiders them.

I ſaid to her; *That the Impreſſion of Dependance on this* Roman *Church, was as it were naturalized in my Soul, and that it would be very ill in me to leave her altogether, tho' I abſolutely deſired to reſign my ſelf entirely unto God.*

She ſaid; Sir, be not any ways troubled. Continue confidently under the *Roman* Church, provided you do not follow in her, but that which is good in it ſelf; abundance cannot hurt. After you ſhall be entirely reſigned unto God, he will uphold you, and will govern you thro' all: The more you ſhall be united to him, the more you will partake of his Vertues; and his Light ſhall be given you more clearly, to diſcover the Truth of every thing. You are now yet a Courtier of this *Roman* Church: Therefore you love her and would feign excuſe her Faults, that you may not be obliged to forſake her; which likewiſe you ought not to do by the Inducement of any; but if you approach to God you will partake of this Light as the Ray partakes of the Sun, according as it is near it. When you ſhall partake of the Righteouſneſs of God, you will ſee with an upright Eye the Injuſtice of this *Roman* Church; and when you ſhall partake of the Truth of God, you will diſcover their Lyes; and having partaken of

(*q*) *Pſ.* 89. 15.

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the Goodneſs of God, you will diſcover that Malice which now you can ſcarce believe: For all the Perfections of God do aſſuredly diſcover the Imperfections which are oppoſite to him. Labour therefore, Sir, to find this Union with God, and be not troubled under whoſe Dependance you are. *Rome* cannot hurt you, when you hearken to none but God. We need not be at the Trouble to learn where the true Church is: For ſhe will be in us as long as we poſſeſs the Law of God and the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, which only makes up the holy Church. It remains only that in the *Roman* Church you beware of the Seductions which are crept in there. This is what Jeſus Chriſt has ſo often warn'd us of in his Goſpel, ſaying, (r) *Beware of falſe Prophets, who will come deceitfully, and ſhall ſeduce many. Falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, who ſhall, if it were poſſible, deceive the very Elect.* He neither ſpeaks of *Turks* nor of *Heathens*, but of falſe Chriſts.

(r) *Mat.* 7. 15. 24. 5. 11. 24.

The Seventh Conference.

Of the Maſs, and of the Sacraments and Eccleſiaſtical Functions.

I ask'd her; *How I ſhould behave in the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments in the Maſs, and other Functions of my Charge?* *She ſaid*; Sir, Do all this in the Spirit that God requires you to do it in; becauſe there are great Abuſes in this: For all theſe things are not what they made us believe of them. Many Superſtitions have crept into them, againſt God's Honour and our Salvation: Therefore you muſt always join your Intention with what (a) God may have in theſe things, or otherwiſe you will commit many Faults, and will likewiſe deceive others. For my part, I believe the Maſs repreſents the Communion that Jeſus Chriſt had with his Apoſtles, who eat and drank with them every Day, bleſſing the Bread and breaking it to diſtribute them; which the Apoſtles

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(a) *Phil.* 2. 5.

(b) con-

(*b*) continued to do with their Diſciples, and afterwards all the Primitive Chriſtians, who aſſembled every Day to eat together, and bleſſing God, imparted to every one as he had need; which maintain'd and nouriſh'd among them the true *CHARITY* which Jeſus Chriſt had left them by Teſtament; (*c*) *Do this in Remembrance of me, and you ſhall live for ever*; becauſe without this *Charity* no body can be ſaved; as St. *Paul* aſſures us; (*d*) *Tho' one could even remove Mountains, tho' he gave all his Goods to the Poor, yea, his Body to be burn'd*, &c. *all this would be nothing without Charity*; which Jeſus Chriſt had recommended to all his Diſciples a little before his Death. This is now out of uſe, and inſtead of nouriſhing and maintaining it by theſe daily (*e*) Meetings of Chriſtians, thoſe who did aſſemble to eat and drink, bleſſing God for what he beſtowed on them, they have chang'd it into the Maſs, which we obſerve to this Day with little Profit and Salvation, except that the Intentions of ſome may be to do it in the Spirit and Deſire which Jeſus Chriſt had when he appointed it, and left it in his Teſtament. It is to this I exhort you, Sir, that you may loſe no Occaſions of following the Deſigns of God, and that you deceive no body in teaching them that they have done enough in going to Maſs: For tho' they ſhould hear a hundred every Day, this would avail them nothing if they have not Charity, which is not now cheriſh'd amongſt Chriſtians tho' they aſſemble every Day to Maſs; becauſe they are not taught for what it is inſtituted, ſince theſe *Romaniſts* have turn'd all things to their greater Advantage. If we would examine narrowly all the other Sacraments, we would find all the ſame Miſchiefs done to the Intereſt of Salvation by thoſe new Inventions and Changes.

I ſaid to her; *That it were better than that I did not exerciſe the Eccleſiaſtical Functions, ſince there was ſo much Abuſe and Hazard in them.*

She ſaid; You would not do Ill, Sir, to abſtain from them, and to live as if you were no Prieſt, were it not that not having as yet Light enough to diſcover the Evils which are hid in them, you would by degrees fall into Scruples for leaving off all your pious Exerciſes. Pray to God that he may let you ſee what you ought to do; and

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(*b*) *Acts* 2. 46. (*c*) *Luke* 22. 19. *John* 6. 55. (*d*) 1 *Cor.* 13. 1, —4. (*e*) *Acts* 6. 1, 2.

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he will ſhew you (as he does me) that all holy things are become prophane, and that there is not any thing in this *Roman* Church which does not ſavour of its Corruption. All People believe that having declared their Sins to the Prieſt, and got Abſolution from him, they are pardoned, tho' it (*f*) is God only who can pardon Sins. The Prieſt can indeed pray for the Penitent who humbles himſelf to declare his Sins as an Interceſſour between God and the Penitent; but he cannot pardon him by his own Authority. He may indeed judge by the Word of God if the Penitent in Juſtice be diſpoſed to have the Pardon of his Sins, and may give him Ground to hope that he ſhall obtain it of God, but not deceive him by making him believe that he himſelf will pardon them, if ſo be he declare them to him; for this Declaration will do nothing without a ſincere and a firm Reſolution of (*g*) Amendment, which God regards, that he may pardon according to his ſtraight Righteouſneſs, and not according to the Judgment of the Prieſt, who may be miſtaken as well as all other Men. How could God have ſo little Equity as to commit to ſome frail Men the Power of ſaving and damning others? What Juſtice could there be that a Confeſſour for want of the Intention to abſolve, ſhould by this means damn thouſands of Perſons who made their Confeſſions to him? It muſt needs be an horrible Blaſphemy againſt God, for any to have ſuch a Perſuaſion, that a well-meaning Perſon, truly penitent, after having duly confeſs'd, dying in this State, ſhould be damn'd, becauſe the Prieſt had not the Intention to abſolve him. If this were true, it would be to render God a Tyrant; becauſe all our good Works would ſerve us for nothing, in caſe our Salvation did depend upon a good or ill Abſolution. Theſe Thoughts or this Belief would make us fall into Idolatry, in taking Men for God, who could ſave or damn according to their Fancies. This God himſelf would never do, becauſe he can never depart from his Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs, and Truth, to judge us always according to them; whereas Men full of Paſſion, Injuſtice, and Impiety, could not but judge us according to theſe. How little Wiſdom ſhould we attribute to God in believing that he would give Men Power to ſave and damn us? He who has commanded us to worſhip none but (*b*) one God alone, he ſhould give us Occaſion of worſhipping all theſe Confeſſors, who would be the Saviours

(*f*) *Mark* 2. 7. (*g*) *Prov.* 28. 13. (*b*) *Deut.* 6. 13.

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of all Chriſtians? Do you not palpably feel, Sir, what evident Perils there are in the Adminiſtration of thoſe Sacraments, after the manner they are uſed at preſent? It were far better to be Idle than to do Evil. 'Tis no Wonder that I doubt of the Salvation of Chriſtians now, when I ſee in their religious Functions ſo many things againſt the Righteouſneſs, the Goodneſs, and the Truth of God. Nevertheleſs I will not give you Advice in this: You may with your own natural Judgment diſcern aright Truth from Lying, and thereafter reſolve to continue or leave off your *Eccleſiaſtical Functions*; For God never conſtrains any body, each one remaining free to chuſe the Means which he perceives to be moſt expedient, without believing any thing blindly, no more what I ſay, Sir, than if another ſaid it to you: But enter into your ſelf, that you may judge uprightly of the pure Truth, you will perceive and feel it if you be diſengag'd from all the Diſcourſes which theſe *Romaniſts* have forg'd, to make their Authority valid. Free your Spirit of all ſorts of Imaginations and Arguments, and come to the Center of the Truth to judge if God would in Juſtice put our Damnation or our Salvation into the Power of any Man unknown to us, who might be a wicked Perſon or a Sorcerer; in which Caſe he would damn as many Souls as he could to gratifie the Devil, to whom he belong'd. It muſt not be ſaid in this, God is Almighty, or his Works are incomprehenſible: For he never exerts his Power without his Righteouſneſs, which is (*i*) not incomprehenſible but makes it ſelf (*k*) be ſeen and commprehended by all thoſe who ſeriouſly conſider it: Becauſe no Good is perfect, if it be not communicated and known.

I ſaid to her; *It was much to be fear'd, I had committed many Faults thro' my blind Submiſſion to this* Roman *Church, enquiring of her the Means to repair them.*

She ſaid; All that is paſt is no longer in your Power: You muſt beg Pardon of God, who is full of Mercy, and does not ſo much reprove the Faults which are done with a good Meaning as thoſe which are done thro' pure Wickedneſs. Tho' Ignorance does not excuſe Sin, yet it leſſens its Malignity; becauſe it has not the full Conſent of the Will. But now endeavour to ſearch more to the Bottom the Things which concern your Salvation, and (*l*) *Do not believe every Spirit, but try* if *what* you are to do or believe,

(*i*) *Wiſd.* 12. 14. (*k*) *Pſ.* 98. 97, 2. (*l*) 1 *John* 4. 1.

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be of God, or of Men, or of the Devil: For all that is not of God, is evil (*m*); and for want of diſcovering this Truth each one runs blindly to his own Perdition, believing even that they do well in following ſo great a Number, of great and wiſe Men who maintain this blind Submiſſion (*n*), which is not fit but for mean Spirits, tho' ſo many of good Judgment have followed it for this long time by-gone; which could not have been found without ſome Infatuation of the Underſtanding with which the Devil has poſſeſs'd all thoſe who lean'd to their own Wiſdom or Authority. Theſe having their Minds bewitch'd, have inſinuated their Errors or Ignorances into others; and ſo the Devil by little and little gains all; ſome by Malice and others by Ignorance: So that I do not ſee any Remedy can be put to this but by the total Ruin of this *Roman* Church, the (*o*) Fall of which will open the Eyes of all thoſe who are not in Covenant with the Devil; which covenanted Perſons will continue in their Darkneſs, notwithſtanding of the Light that is given: But others, tho' Wicked, will be obliged to confeſs their Deluſions, curſing thoſe who have thus deceived them, under the Maſque and Colour of Good. How many Prieſts, Monks and Religious, have ſaid and yet ſay, Come to us who are Chriſt, we'll pardon you your Sins: Give us, and you ſhall be ſaved. But Jeſus Chriſt forbids us (*p*) to go here and there while they ſay to us that Chriſt is there.

I ask'd her, *How the Righteouſneſs of God could permit ſo great a Number to periſh thro' Ignorance?*

She ſaid; It is a culpable Ignorance; Becauſe we have always had the Means to ſearch the Truth if we had had a Deſire to find it: For the Goſpel was recoverable, eſpecially in the *Roman* Church, where it remains as the Teſtament that Jeſus Chriſt has left his Spouſe. What Unrighteouſneſs was there in God, in ſuffering theſe Perſons to remain in the Ignorance of their Errours, ſince they loved them (*q*) more than the Truth? and becauſe theſe Errors were more agreeable to their Senſualities, they have voluntarily followed them, building on (*r*) the Flatteries of thoſe who promis'd them Salvation by theſe Errors. It would be rather an Unrigh-

(*m*) *Matth.* 1 5. 12, 14. (*n*) *Matth.* 15. 14. (*o*) *Rev.* 19. 1, 2, 9. (*p*) *Matth.* 24 26. (*q*) 2 *Theſ.* 2. 10, 11, 12. (*r*) 2 *Pet.* 2. 18, 19.

teouſneſs

teouſneſs in God, if he had conſtrain'd them to follow his Truth, after having given them their Free-Will: He could not take it back again without Injuſtice, no more than we can any thing that we have given to another. It is not in our Power to take it again without committing a Robbery: Becauſe the thing given away, does not any longer appertain to us. Thus God by an exact Righteouſneſs, may let the Ignorants err; Becauſe their Ignorance is affected: For if their Ignorance were out of Simplicity, God is ſo good that he would rather ſend an Angel from Heaven to enlighten them, that (*s*) they might not periſh; but (*t*) when the Free Perſon gives ear to Flatteries, and to thoſe who ſtudy to ſpeak according as they deſire to hear, he ought not in Juſtice to hinder them. For it is moſt true, that if I were to Day among theſe erring Ignorants, and if I told them the Truth, I would not be heard, and far leſs followed: Becauſe they who teach them theſe Errors, ſpeak more to their Liking and accommodate themſelves more to their Senſualities than the Truth does; which often reproves them, and never flatters them. Thus they with juſt Reaſon are abandoned to the Spirit of Error; ſince according to the Saying of the Goſpel, *They* (*u*) *have loved Darkneſs more than Light.* Therefore they ſhall periſh in the Darkneſs which they love. If you knew, Sir, the Righteouſneſs of God, it would be impoſſible that you could once doubt of it: For it is ſo juſt that neither Man nor the Devil can find any thing in Truth to blame in it: But when we look on Things on the Outſide, and according to our Ignorance, it ſeems to us that God does unjuſt things, when they are moſt perfect.

(*s*) *Pſal.* 25. (24.) 8. (*t*) 2 *Tim.* 4. 3. 4. (*u*) *John* 3. 19.

The Eighth Conference.

What are the Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and how much they prevail.

I Entreated her to tell me, *In what Senſe ſhe underſtood that all Chriſtians do now live and die in the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which ſhall not be forgiven them, neither in this World, nor in the other, as ſhe had ſometime declared to me?*

She ſaid; Sir, 'tis moſt true, the moſt Pious now-a-days are loſt by theſe Sins: For no body is aware of them, and they believe that they are the Sins which are abominable before Men; *becauſe they ſhall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other (a)*; But they are only ſpiritual Sins, which a Man may commit without having done an ill Action: Therefore they ſhall never be forgiven, becauſe they do not know them; and far leſs will they repent of them. For this Cauſe they will not be forgiven in this World: For no Sin is forgiven here without *(b)* true Repentance and abſolute Deſire of Amendment; which two Conditions are not to be met with in the Matter of thoſe Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt: For they are contrary to Repentance and to Amendment; and therefore will not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For no body will then receive Forgiveneſs, but they who ſhall receive the Truth; which thoſe who commit one of theſe Sins do reſiſt, by impugning the known Truth: So that the ſaid Sins will neither be forgiven in this World, nor in that to come. I do not ſpeak of an imaginary Paradiſe; becauſe no Sin enters there, and conſequently they cannot be forgiven if there be none. But in the other World, which ſhall be the Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, he will yet find many Sins to be forgiven *(c)* at his coming: Nevertheleſs thoſe committed againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven there no more than here in this World; becauſe they are oppoſed to all the Means which can procure this Pardon. It is of

(a) Matth. 12. 31. *(b) Acts* 2. 37, 38. *(c) Rev.* 1. 7. *compare Zach.* 12. 10.

theſe

theſe that Jeſus Chriſt ſays, (e) *That he who has ſinned againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him; but he who has ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall never be forgiven him*: Becauſe this Coming of the Holy Spirit on Earth is the laſt Mercy that God will grant the World; and he who ſhall reſiſt this, can never any more repair his Fault. He muſt needs die in it.

I entreated, *She would ſhew to me in particular, the Meaning of theſe Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt.*

She ſaid; Sir, I do not know them all in Order, but I ſhall ſpeak of thoſe which I remember, beginning with that of the *Preſumption of being ſaved without good Works.* This concerns all thoſe who profeſs to live well (f): For amongſt them there are very few who do good Works; becauſe they eſteem their Works good, when they appear ſuch to their own Judgment or that of ſome others, tho' very often, they are not ſuch before God: becauſe all that's good before him muſt partake of his *Goodneſs*, which is always *Righteous* and *True*. Now our good Works for the moſt part have neither the one nor the other of theſe Conditions: For they are done, either out of Humane Reſpects, or out of Natural Inclination, or they are not truly good in themſelves: and when we do any good Works out of Humane Reſpects, they are not good before God, and can never make us obtain Salvation; becauſe we have received our Reward in this World, having obtain'd the end for which we have done them, to wit, the Satisfaction of Men, and we have no right to pretend to any other Recompence: And if we have done our good Works out of Natural Inclinations, or for our own Satisfaction, theſe Works likewiſe can give us no Pretenſion to Salvation; becauſe they are rewarded by the Satisfaction which we have received in them. Thirdly, we do Works, as good, which are but indifferent, or indeed, ſometimes evil. For to go to Church only out of Cuſtom, is an indifferent Work; and if being there, we behave as in a prophane Place, it is an evil Work. It is the ſame as to the frequenting of the Sacraments: And if we give Alms thro' ſome Natural Tenderneſs or Inclination this Work has not that Righteouſneſs nor Goodneſs to make it paſs for Good in God's Sight. So that to do no good Works before God, and notwithſtanding to preſume of Salvation, is a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: So that we believe we have merited Salvation by good Works, which do not de-

(e) *Matth.* 12. 31, 32. (f) *Matth.* 6. 1, —— 8.

rive their Goodneſs from God. Nevertheleſs we think he is obliged to give us Paradiſe (*g*) as the moſt part of Pious and Religious Perſons do, preſuming to have that by Right of Juſtice which is not due to them; becauſe there are none but true Righteouſneſs and Charity that can be call'd good Works by which we may hope for Salvation: And tho' none be adorned with theſe Vertues, each one notwithſtanding believes he ſhall obtain it, as if God could ſave without Righteouſneſs.

There is alſo another Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is *to impugn the known Truth.* This is now commonly Practis'd by thoſe who are called Spiritual.

For if we ſhould tell any of them that they are not true Chriſtians, or that we live in the Reign of Antichriſt, or that the World is judged, and that its Wickedneſs is come to the Heighth, they would believe nothing of this; loving rather to ſtick to their old Cuſtoms, than to learn how they may become true Chriſtians, and they would likewiſe ſcruple to believe that we are fallen into the Reign of Antichriſt tho' we ſee by Mens Lives and Manners, that of Neceſſity, they muſt be engag'd to the Devil; and tho' they ſee no Hope or Appearance that the World will grow better, yet they do not believe that 'tis judged. Thus they impugn the Truth of all theſe things, the Belief of which might bring them to Converſion and to a Life leading to Salvation; but they impugn all theſe Truths, that they may continue in their ſo dangerous Darkneſs, tho' they be ſufficiently known to all thoſe who will open their Eyes: But they who will impugn the Truth, commit this Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which ſhall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For they will never be converted (*g*), becauſe of the Reſiſtance which they make to the Truth, which is that that gives Salvation. They know well enough that their Life is not that of a true Chriſtian: Nevertheleſs they impugn this Truth; becauſe they have no Deſire to become one. They ſee the Devil rules thro' all in Lyes and Deceits, and that all oppoſe the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt; and they will not believe that this is the time of Antichriſt, that they might reſiſt and beware of him, and by impugning this Truth, they deſire not to avoid his Snares. They ſee that Wickedneſs is univerſally at a Heighth; and they will not

(*g*) *Mat.* 7. 21, 22. 25, 11. (*h*) 2 *Tim.* 3. 8.

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believe that the World is judged, that they may not be afraid of this Judgment.

Another Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is the Envy of the ſpiritual Good of others, which is ſo generally committed, that almoſt they make no Reflection on it, and among the moſt Pious this Envy is the moſt ordinary. We may only remark the ſeveral Orders of Religious Perſons: They are almoſt inſupportable to one another, each one valuing his own Order and Community, and they cannot hear the Perfections and Praiſes of others mentioned, without having a ſpiritual Envy againſt them ſecretly in their Hearts; and even if a particular Perſon among them excel the reſt in ſpiritual Good, he would be envied, yea, hardly uſed by all the reſt, or impriſoned, if he ſhould live in greater Perfection among them than generally they do, or ſhould declare the truth of their Faults: So that if a votary of any of their Religious Orders, ſhould obſerve literally the Goſpel which Jeſus Chriſt has left us, I believe he would be martyr'd, or ſo hardly us'd by the reſt, that it would be impoſſible for him to live among them without ſuffering a thouſand Deaths of Perſecutions; and for any ſecular Perſon who would obſerve the Goſpel in the World, he would be envied likewiſe by all thoſe who profeſs to be vertuous and are not, who would reject with Contempt this manner of Practice, which would not be conformable to their own: For there is ſuch a ſecret Pride in their Hearts that they cannot ſuffer that another ſhould lead a better Life than themſelves, nor even that he ſhould have the Name of it; but they would endeavour to vilifie and deſpiſe him, or make him to be ſuſpected of Levity or other Evils; in which is now fulfilled the Prediction of Jeſus Chriſt, when he ſays, (i) *You ſhall be hated of all for my Name's ſake*: For the Apoſtles were never hated of all; becauſe many ſtill lov'd and follow'd them: But at preſent this Warning is fully accompliſhed; becauſe he who walks in the Truth is hated of all: For this Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt of the ſpiritual envying of another, poſſeſſes the Hearts of all thoſe who make a Profeſſion of Vertue: Becauſe having no true Vertue, they envy that which is true and continue therein all their Days without deſiring to change, becauſe they do not eſteem this a *Sin*, but rather *Wiſdom*; that they will not own what they do not practiſe, covering this Sin with a Fidelity and

(i) *Luk.* 21. 17.

Conſtancy in what has been firſt taught them: And thus they die in Envy.

Another Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is *Obſtinacy in Sin*, is alſo in uſe amongſt thoſe who make a Profeſſion of Vertue: For not being willing to own the forementioned things to be Sins, they continue obſtinate in them, and therefore will not be forgiven; becauſe they will not ask Pardon nor repent of them: For as much as they are perſuaded that they are not Sins, becauſe they are inward and ſpiritual: Therefore they die in Obſtinacy in Sin: And even tho' they ſhould live till the other World, they would not be converted from the Preſumption of their Salvation; becauſe they are poſſeſs'd with a good Opinion of their good Works, neither will they ſubmit to the Truth, which would ſhew them the contrary. Thus they commit this Sin with the other following ones, which are againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

Wilful Murder is alſo committed by the ſame ſpiritual Perſons, and they will not acknowledge it: For very often they occaſion Death to themſelves or others by their ſenſual or indiſcreet Inclinations. How many of thoſe do we ſee wedded to their Appetites of Eating, Drinking and other bodily Exerciſes, tho' they be prejudicial to their Health? They will not change nor leave them, even tho' they be advertis'd of it. How many die before their time by too much Eating or Drinking or taking ſomething prejudicial to their Health or thro' too much Labour? And on the contrary, how many are there who kill themſelves by indiſcreet Faſtings, or other Penances, or the Neglect of neceſſary things? All thoſe are wilful Murtherers, becauſe they kill themſelves, to ſatisfie their own Senſualities or Inclinations; and they are alſo often Murtherers of others; becauſe they occaſion ſometimes their Neighbours Death by indirect Ways, as in forcing ſome to work beyond their Strength, or in croſſing and vexing them ſo much in their Goods and in their Spirit, that they die of Grief; or by not taking away Debates and Quarells when they can do it, and theſe encreaſe till they come to kill one another; or when by ſome Act or Omiſſion they occaſion the Riſe of ſuch Debates; or when one comes to die thro' the Neglect of our neceſſary Succour or Aſſiſtance. By all theſe things wilful Murther is committed; tho' the Will be indirect, it ceaſes not to be before God as great a Sin as a direct Murther: For the Life is taken away indirectly as well as directly: And ſometimes it would be leſs evil to kill a Perſon at

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one Stroke, than to kill him by degrees; and the Sin alſo would ſometimes be leſs, by a Stroke given in a ſudden Paſſion, than when it laſts for ſo long a time; and theſe Sins are often repeated. Nevertheleſs none do perceive theſe kinds of Sins to be ſuch as they are; but the moſt ſpiritual fall into them thro' Negligence, and very often without deſiring to know them: And thus while they do not repent of them, they cannot obtain Pardon no more than of the other Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, becauſe they are committed ſecretly, and without Repentance; which draws on a Deſpair of Salvation, which is alſo one of thoſe Sins. This *Deſpair of Salvation* is ordinarily excited by the Devil at the End of their Life. When he he has train'd up Souls in the other Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt he diſcovers them to them at Death to make them fall into Deſpair of their Salvation: For then their Eyes being open'd to conſider the great Number of Sins which they have committed againſt the Holy Ghoſt, all the Days of their Life, of which they have never repented, and how often they have receiv'd the Sacraments in this evil State: This makes them fall into a Deſpair of being ſaved; becauſe the Soul is diſordered, and cannot perceive the Means of its Salvation: Yea, tho' they ſhould not diſtinctly perceive all thoſe Sins, they are notwithſtanding in ſuch Confuſion and Perplexity that they durſt not hope for Salvation, and they would be aſhamed to declare their Miſery to Men, who ſtill held them for good Men. Hence it is that theſe Souls die without Repentance, which is the Conſummation of all their Evils: For by the ſtraight Righteouſneſs of God no Sins will ever be pardoned without Repentance; and they, not embracing this, die miſerably, tho' they have lived in a ſeeming Holineſs, they go notwithſtanding to receive their Portion with Devils; even tho' they had but one of theſe Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, they ſhall never be ſaved.

I ſaid to her; *That I began to doubt of the Salvation of all Men, ſince they who are called Saints do ſo commonly periſh: That theſe Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt were ſo much to be dreaded, and nevertheleſs ſo few are afraid of them; that God's Judgment of things is quite different from that of Men.*

She ſaid; Yes, truly Sir, God's Judgment is quite another thing than Man's (*l*): For moſt frequently what they e-

(*k*) *Iſ.* 55. 8, 9. (*l*) *Luke* 16. 15.

ſteem Good is in God's ſight very bad. This is ſince they left his Righteouſneſs and lean'd to their own. They are now uncapable of making a right Judgment; becauſe their own Righteouſneſs is blind, and founded only on their own Imaginations, and not at all on the Truth, which could never deceive them: For it is unchangeable, and without Diſſimulation; but the Truth and Righteouſneſs of Men is lying and deceitful, and he who truſts in it, muſt of Neceſſity periſh; becauſe it flatters us to our Perdition. If we had continued in the Righteouſneſs of God, our Judgment would have been conformable to his: But ſince we are fallen into Unrighteouſneſs, we judge unrighteouſly, both in reſpect of God and of our ſelves: For we judge falſely of God on all Occaſions, attributing very often to him the Blame of our Damnation, and of all the other Evils which befall us; Tho' notwithſtanding no Evil can come from God, he being the Fountain of all Good, to which all Evils are oppoſite: We may alſo judge amiſs as to our ſelves, believing often our Salvation to be ſure, when it is in great Hazard as you may ſee by the Deduction of the Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, of which I have ſo particularly ſpoken to you, to let you ſee, Sir, how the moſt Pious are deceived, ſince they ſtrayed from the Righteouſneſs and the Truth of God, they are full of frivolous Devotions, which blind their Underſtanding, that they know not real Truth, nor ſolid Vertue, but amuſing themſelves with the Diſcourſes of Men, and ſeeming Vertues, they live and die in a Preſumption of their Salvation, without good Works, and thus they periſh for ever.

THE

The Ninth Conference,

That no body can be ſaved, but he who profeſſes the Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth of God. The World is at preſent without them, but it ſhall be renewed. The Danger that Men are in. Secret Evil ought to be diſcovered.

I Said to her; *That many would be deceived at Death; becauſe no body is endued with that Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth of God; and if there can be no Salvation without theſe, no body will be ſaved, or very few.*

She ſaid; No, Sir, no body can be ſaved if he do not poſſeſs (*a*) the RIGHTEOUSNESS, the GOODNESS and the TRUTH of God. Therefore Jeſus Chriſt ſays, (*b*) *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* He does not mean that we ſhould be perfect as God, in his Power or his Eſſence; but in proportion to our being in his Righteouſneſs, his Goodneſs and Truth. The *Righteouſneſs* of God makes us do all things juſtly, as well in Regard of our Enemies, as of our Friends and our ſelves: ſo that we muſt always, at all times, and on all Occaſions, be righteous both in Word and Deed. In this conſiſts the Righteouſneſs of God: For if we are righteous only according to our own Inclinations, we have nothing but a Humane Righteouſneſs, which ends with us, and cannot ſave us. Conſider, Sir, the Righteouſneſs of the *Phariſee* (*c*), you'll ſee that he faſted twice a Week, paid Tithes of all that he poſſeſs'd, and did other good things in the Judgment of Men; and notwithſtanding he is rejected by God, and not juſtified; which makes it appear to us ſufficiently, that to be ſaved, we muſt have another Righteouſneſs than our own; that it muſt be conformable to the Righteouſneſs of God, or elſe it will not avail us for Eternity; becauſe it is ſaid elſe-

(*a*) *Pſ.* 15. (14.) *Pſ.* 112. (111.) 4. (*b*) *Matth.* 5. 48. (*c*) *Luke* 18 10, 14.

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where, (*d*) If your Righteouſneſs exceed not that of the *Phariſees*, you ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nevertheleſs there are very few who attain to the Righteouſneſs of the *Phariſee*, and yet every one believes he ſhall be ſaved, tho' he has neither Divine nor Humane Righteouſneſs. Muſt there not be many deceived at Death? For to have the *Goodneſs* of God alſo, a Man muſt do Good to all, (*e*) without reſpect of Perſons, and he muſt not do Evil (*f*): For he who is evil in ſomething ceaſes to be good, and to partake of the Goodneſs of God, who does always good, and never does evil. And to have the Truth of God, a Man muſt be true in all things; which Men are very far from: For they lye in all things, to God, to themſelves, and to their Neighbour. They lye to God, in ſaying that they love him, and are reſigned to him, while there is not ſo much as one Perſon in the World that is reſigned to the Will (*g*) of God. Every one will needs depend on himſelf, and follow his own Will, or that of ſome other Perſon he has choſen for theſe Ends and is not ſatisfied with the Will of God, except in ſo far as it is conformable to his Inclinations. We lye alſo to our ſelves, perſuading our ſelves that we are Chriſtians, tho' we do not in any of our Actions follow the Inſtructions of Jeſus Chriſt: We make our ſelves believe that we are juſt and vertuous, that we would not offend God in any thing, while we do it every Moment, having nothing in the ſight of God but an imaginary and hypocritical Righteouſneſs and Perfection. We lye alſo in reſpect of our Neighbour, who looking upon our outward Works of Devotion, or Habits, or Words, thinks that we are ſuch before God as we appear; but it is not ſo. In fine, we are as far remov'd from the Truth of God, as Hell is from Heaven; and alſo from his Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs; and yet we think to be ſaved! What a great Preſumption is this of Salvation, without good Works, which will never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For we will never repent, becauſe of unknown Blindneſs! For he who ſhou'd know it, wou'd endeavour to find out a Remedy or Cure; and would ſay as the blind Man in the Goſpel (*h*) *Lord, that I may ſee!* But as long as we believe that we ſee clearly, we take no care to ſearch for Remedies to an evil that we will

(*d*) *Matth.* 5. 20. (*e*) *Matth.* 5. 44, 45. (*f*) *Rom.* 13. 10. 3 *Joh.* 11. (*g*) *Iſ.* 59. 15, 16. (*h*) *Luke* 18. 41.

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not know which cauſes the Damnation of all Men in the World, becauſe none are free of this horrible Darkneſs.

Theſe laſt Words made me tremble, being joyned to thoſe ſhe had ſaid before; that there was not ſo much as one Man in the World who was reſigned to God. I asked her how it was poſſible that God ſhould create all Men to be damn'd?

She ſaid; Sir, God hath created no body to be damn'd; (*i*) but all Men for Salvation: For God can damn no body. It muſt needs ſtill be that Man damns himſelf of his own Free-Will; otherwiſe God ſhou'd do an evil thing, which he cannot do, but does all good. This being ſo, Sir, you muſt ask Men, each one in particular, *how is it poſſible that they damn themſelves?* But you muſt not ask God, how is it poſſible that each one is damn'd? For he wou'd anſwer, it is (*k*) becauſe they'll be ſo of their own Free-Will; which ſhall never be taken from them. Every one damn us himſelf, for his own particular, and all theſe particular Damnations being put together, make this general Damnation, which God cannot hinder; (*l*) For he cannot ſave ſo much as one Soul without the Conſent of the Free-Will which he has once given it; letting each one enjoy this Free-Will without any Conſtraint; all Men in particular are free to damn themſelves, as they do; becauſe they will not reſign themſelves to the Will of God, which Reſignation wou'd aſſuredly ſave them, rendring them happy both in this World, and the other. But ſince we will not continue in a Dependence on God, but will follow and depend on our own Wills, we render our ſelves miſerable, both in this World, and to all Eternity. The Sins of our firſt Parents ought to have made us wiſe: For by forſaking this Dependence, they brought on themſelves all ſorts of Miſeries; and we not ſatisfied to groan yet under theſe by participation, do daily encreaſe them by our own proper Reſolution, that we will not be rul'd and govern'd by the ſame God, who demands of us the ſame Dependence which he demanded of thoſe our firſt Parents; which we do conſtantly deny him, and will needs depend on our own Will, and follow it as much as we can, without informing our ſelves of the Will of God. Now every one doing this as to his own particular, is it a Wonder that all in general periſh ſince none in particular will reſign himſelf to the Will of God, without which no body ſhall be ſaved?

(*i*) 1 *Tim.* 2. 4, 5. (*k*) *Prov.* 8. 36. *Wiſd*, 1. 16. (*l*) *Matth.* 23. 27.

I ask'd

I ask'd, *If God could have created ſo beautiful a World, with all that is within it, only for Men, who will damn themſelves ſince all in general will needs depend on their own Wills, and that no Perſon in the World is reſigned to the Will of God.*

She ſaid; God has not created this beautiful World, Sir, for theſe Men who ſhall be reprobated, but for the Elect only; and thoſe who of their free Choice and Free-Will ſhall depend entirely on God, and be ruled and governed wholly at his Pleaſure, renouncing altogether their own Will and Deſires (*m*). Theſe ſhall enjoy to all Eternity this beautiful World, with all that is within it, in all Perfection, as I have already told you, Sir, the World ſhall laſt always, and none of the Works of God ſhall ever periſh; neither Men, nor Beaſts, nor any other Creatures; but each of them in their kind, ſhall remain for ever for the Honour of God and the Delight of Men who ſhall live after the Extermination of all Evil.

But if the Men who live now, will not reſign themſelves to the Will of God, but follow that of the Devil or their own: Theſe ſhall not poſſeſs the World, but ſhall only ſojourn in it for a little time, and they ſhall go out of it without carrying any thing away but the Sins with which they have loaded themſelves during ſo ſhort a Voyage: But all that is beautiful and good in the World, ſhall remain for the Elect (*n*), who ſhall enjoy it to all Eternity. For if this were not, we ſhou'd have indeed a mean God, who had created the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, all the Elements, ſo many different Creatures as there are in the World, and all this only for the Devil, and for Men who will damn themſelves, as they do at preſent. It wou'd follow that God ſhou'd have little Power to be thus fruſtrated of his Pretenſions, in having created ſo many excellent things, if they ſhou'd ſerve only for the Uſe of the Reprobate, and the Devil ſhou'd carry away all the Fruits of the ſix Days Labours which he did in creating this beautiful World, if all this ſhou'd be for the Devil and his Adherents! No, no, Sir, this cannot go ſo. God muſt have his time to reign over all his Creatures, that they may adore and know him the only true God, and that the Number of his Elect may be multiplied, as much as he has deſtin'd them; that theſe never dying, may bleſs him to all Eternity. This is the Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt which

(*m*) *Pſ.* 37. (*n*) *Rev.* 21. 7. *Iſ.* 60. 21. 65. 9, --25.

I wait for, Sir, with Chearfulneſs. Nothing can afflict me in this Hope. It is a joyful Life to think on it, what Joy muſt it be to poſſeſs it?

I ſaid to her; *That theſe Words did raviſh me with Pleaſure; but that I had alſo in Exchange the Grief to believe, that all Men now are in a State of Damnation, for fear leſt I alſo be of the Number.*

She replied; You may indeed rejoice, Sir, 'Tis the greateſt Ground of Joy that we can ever have. 'Tis the Maſterpiece of all the Works of God, and (o) the Accompliſhment of all things. For this the World is created, for this Man is created, and for this God is become Man. The Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Sufferings, was for Sinners; but his glorious Coming will be for the Righteous. Therefore he ſays, being in the World, (p) *I am not come to ſave the Righteous, but to bring Sinners to Repentance.* God from all Eternity deſign'd to become Man, to the end he might not only make Man like to him, but that God alſo might be like to Man, that he might take his perfect and compleat Delight with him. 'Tis good to conſider this, Sir, that God is not become Man, only on deſign to ſuffer and to die: For this would have been a ſad Subject; and the ancient Patriarchs wou'd have had little Ground to have prayed and deſired ſo earneſtly that God ſhould become Man to ſee him hardly uſed, ſuffering Reproaches, Scourges, and ſo cruel a Death. The Love they bare to God wou'd rather have made them deſire to remain in their Captivity, than to be delivered from it at ſo dear a Price as the Sufferings and the Death of God-Man. All thoſe Wiſhes and Aſpirations which all the Fathers and Prophets of the ancient Law made, cou'd not be for this Coming in Sufferings; but rather that glorious Coming, wherein Jeſus Chriſt (q) *being lifted up, will draw all Men unto him*; which his Death on the Croſs has not done, becauſe very few followed him then, and no body follows him at preſent. This is very far from drawing all to him, ſeeing ſo few have been drawn from the Beginning of the World even till now. Muſt there not a Time come wherein that he may fulfil his Word, he will draw all in general to him? Muſt he not alſo to make the ſame Accompliſhment (r) *take away the Sins of the World*? For his Death, inſtead of

(o) *Rev.* 21. 6. (p) *Matth.* 9. 13. (q) *Joſ.* 12. 32. (r) *John* 1. 29.

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taking away the Sins of the World, has rather brought on more; becauſe they have encreas'd and multiply'd ſince. Can God fail in his Promiſe? Muſt there not come a time when he will take away all the Sins of the World? If this were not, God ſhou'd not be faithful in his Promiſes; which cannot be true: For (s) *Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away, but his Promiſes ſhall not paſs away.* There is not a Syllable of them which ſhall not have its entire Accompliſhment in an altogether perfect Sence. They wou'd ſometimes make us believe that all this ſhall be fulfilled in Paradiſe; and they tell us that nothing defiled can enter there: How then ſhall there be Sins there to be taken away? And if all the Bleſſed are united to him, there will be no more need of drawing them.

I ſaid to her; *That I was ſo convinced, as to believe that we muſt look for a new World and a new Earth, and that I knew well enough that nothing of the holy Scripture ſhall have its Accompliſhment in this World; but that I was not freed from the Trouble of believing that all Men now were in a State of Damnation, of which Number I was one, tho' nevertheleſs I deſired to be ſaved, whatever it coſt.*

She ſaid; Sir, to diſcover Truths, you muſt always take things in their Source. Conſider, I pray you, that the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Sufferings, was for no other Grounds but to make known to Men their Sins. in which they liv'd ſo blindly that the moſt Part knew not what they did, but followed one another inſenſibly in the Way of Perdition, as they do yet at preſent, God of his great Mercy wou'd have become Man before his Coming in Glory, that he might bring Light to Sinners, whereby they might know their Sins, and to teach them in particular what they ought to do and avoid, to the end they may obſerve the Law of God, which he came not to change nor aboliſh, no more than to give a new one; but only to teach the Means by which Men ſhou'd eaſily attain to the obſerving of this Law of God, which was given from the Beginning of the World, and will never be changed: For God will never demand any other thing of Men but the Dependence, which they ought always to acknowledge, they have on their God, who has created them and given them all things. In the Practice of this Dependence is contain'd all the Law and the Prophets, and the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt.

(s) *Matth.* 24. 35.

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They can have no other thing in Subſtance: But Men being fallen from the obſerving of this firſt Law, have need from time to time of divers Means to raiſe them again from their Fall. For theſe ends Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World timouſly, and ere it periſh, before his limited time; that taking Humane Fleſh, he might teach Men palpably, according to their Senſes, to the end they might not be any more ignorant of any thing, but might get out of Darkneſs to diſcover their Sins, and ſee clearly the Way they ought to take, to come to Salvation. And that thoſe Means which Jeſus Chriſt came to teach them, might not ſeem too grievous and difficult to them, he wou'd needs pave the Way himſelf, and put them in practice all the time he was on Earth, to the end Men might afterwards follow his Steps (*t*), and imitate his Example. By this Foundation, Sir, you can eaſily diſcover whether all Men be in the Way of Salvation or Damnation. Lay this down firſt, that (*u*) no body ſhall be ſaved but he who keeps the Law of God. Secondly, that Men thro' their Frailty, cannot obſerve this Law but by ſuch Means as Jeſus Chriſt has taught them (*x*); becauſe they imagine that they live in a Dependence upon God, when they do but depend on their own Wills. To make this known, Jeſus Chriſt teaches them, that to be his, (*y*) they muſt deny themſelves. Not that this Law of denying ones ſelf, was ordain'd in theſe preciſe Words in the Beginning of the World, but it was tacitly contain'd in the Law of *LOVING ONE GOD ONLY*; becauſe we cannot love him only, when we love our ſelves; and whereas Men did not underſtand well the Contents of this Law, Jeſus Chriſt is come to explain it to us ſo particularly by all the Precepts of his Goſpel, that no body can be ignorant any longer, how he ought to keep the Law of God, and conſequently, work out his Salvation; becauſe this Goſpel Law does preciſely mark out to us all that we ought to do and to avoid: So that we muſt not look any longer from any, neither from God nor Men, for other Inſtructions in order to our Salvation; becauſe Jeſus Chriſt has omitted nothing, nor ſaid any thing that is ſuperfluous, but ſhewn us all things neceſſary for obtaining eternal Life.

(*t*) 1 *Pet.* 2. 21. (*u*) *Matth.* 7. 21. (*x*) *Rom.* 8. 3. (*y*) *Matth.* 16. 24.

Now

Now consider, Sir, if you know any living this Day in the World who have entirely resign'd their Wills to that of God, and who love no other thing but him. If you do not know any, be firmly persuaded, that none within your Knowledge, is in a State of Salvation. And fearing lest you be deceived by this general Persuasion, as many are, who persuade themselves that they are resign'd to God, and love none but him; remark particularly if they observe the Gospel Law: For we cannot observe the one without practising the other: For he who has entirely resign'd his Will to that of God, (z) lives no longer to himself, but God lives in him, and works there all that Jesus Christ has taught; seeing the same Spirit lives in one resign'd to God, which lived in the Body of Jesus Christ. There can never be any difference here, being in both the same unchangeable God.

I said to her; *That this being supposed, I had good Ground to fear, that all the World was in a State of Damnation, and I likewise, but that I would get out of this Darkness and receive the Light that God should give me, that I might follow him.*

She said; Sir, you'll be happy in doing it: For otherwise it is to be feared, you may perish with others; because all the World goes on blindly to Perdition; *but the Light (a) is now arisen in Darkness. Do not reject it, (b) to love your Darkness rather than the Light*; but rather (c) *walk according to it while the Day doth last*, that is to say, our short Life, which is nothing but a Day in Comparison with Eternity: The Night of this Day, is our Death, after which there is nothing more to do: In whatsoever (d) State we die, we shall abide in it. Therefore we ought not to let the Occasion slip that is now offered us. Let not your self be gained by Flatteries, nor by false Persuasions. Seek always the Truth: For they who flatter us, (e) ruine us. Look on all those as Flatterers, who speak to you according to their sensual Inclinations, and hold those for Deceivers who persuade you that you are a good Christian, and that you will be saved after the Way that you live at present: For there are no true Christians but those who follow and imitate

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(z) *Gal.* 2. 20. (a) *Is.* 58. 10. (b) *Joh.* 3. 19. (c) *Joh.* 12. 35, 36. (d) *Eccl.* 11. 3. (e) *Is.* 9. 15.

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the Life and Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt; and there is no Salvation to be hop'd for, but in keeping the Law of God. You muſt take up with theſe two Things, Sir, if you wou'd attain to Salvation, the Law of God and the Doctrine of Jeſus. The Holy Spirit, which is now come into the World, brings no new Law, nor new Explications of it; becauſe Jeſus Chriſt has ſufficiently explained it: He comes only to make the Law appear (*f*) and the Sins that are oppoſite to it, to the end that we may embrace the one and reject the other. You have wondred ſometimes that I told you ſo many evil Things of the Church and of ſpiritual Perſons: Believe me, this was not but by the Light of the Holy Spirit, that you might avoid the Evil in order to the doing well, ſince you cannot love the one without hating the other: Truth muſt always diſcern the one from the other, or otherwiſe you will be eaſily deceived, as all the World at preſent is, who take Vice for Vertue, and apparent for true good. Therefore receive the true Light, that you may judge uprightly, and not according to the Appearance of Things: For the Devil is ſo covered with Virtue, and cloathed with Hypocriſie, that he deceives even thoſe of the beſt Diſpoſitions. There are frequently ſo many falſe Goods in the World, that we do not diſtinguiſh them from the true: And that we may not come to diſcover them, he puts ſome Scruples in the Minds of good Men, that they may not believe the Truth of the Evil, and makes his Adherents teach, that 'tis a Sin of Detraction to diſcover the Faults of Prieſts, and of thoſe who make a Profeſſion of Vertue, that their Sins remaining ſecret, they may deceive the more, and may commit them more honourably; and they ſay, *that a Man ſhould take his own Garments to cover the ſins of the Prieſts.* That you may ſee that this Doctrine comes from the Devil, you need but mark what Jeſus Chriſt did in ſuch Encounters; whether he covered with his Garments the Sins of the Popes, Biſhops and Prieſts who were in his time. We will find (*g*) that he declared them openly before all the World, calling them *Hypocrites, Generation of Vipers, wicked Sepulchres,* and ſo many other Names, to the end he might declare to People their Wickedneſs, that they might beware of them: For he ſays, (*h*) *beware of the Leaven of the Phariſees, and* (*i*) *of thoſe who come to you in*

(*f*) *John* 16. 8. (*g*) *Matth.* 23. 8. (*h*) *Mat.* 16. 6. (*i*) *Mat.* 7. 15.

Sheeps Cloathing, and inwardly are ravening Wolves. All this, with many other Evils, Jeſus Chriſt ſpoke of the Prieſts of his time; and now they teach that we muſt honour them and ſpeak well of them, tho' they live ill! Does not this Doctrine oppoſe that of Jeſus Chriſt? and therefore it is Antichriſtian. Nevertheleſs, you, Sir, with ſo many others, think you commit a Sin to hear the Truth of Evil. 'Tis by this falſe Piety, that the Devil takes his Advantage: For their Evils being conceal'd, they commit them more than if they were diſcovered; becauſe Shame and Humane Reſpect wou'd with-hold them from Sin; and alſo the Good and Pious wou'd not be ſo eaſily deceived, as they are by the good Opinion of Evil, which often draws in the Good by Ignorance, who are perſuaded that they who have the Reputation of being good, wou'd not do Evil. How many thouſand have been deceived after this manner! Take heed that you never be one of theſe; but ſtay your ſelf on the living Rock, which is Jeſus Chriſt. He cannot deceive nor fail. Take up with his Inſtructions, Sir, and follow them. You'll be ſure of your Salvation, which otherwiſe I cannot promiſe you. Whatever Men ſay, they are not our Saviours: For it is written, (k) *Wo to the Man that put his Confidence in Man.* He is truly miſerable who grounds his Salvation on the Words and Sentiments of Men, who can give us nothing but vain Hopes, founded on their Imaginations. It is not enough to truſt to theſe weak Stays; we muſt take another Aim, and direct our Selves towards that Morning Star which appears to our Eyes, that we may follow it till we have found this Holy Spirit who muſt teach us all things.

(k) *Jer.* 1. 17, 5.

The Tenth Conference.

That the Time is come that Man ſhall receive the Holy Spirit in Fulneſs, and what hinders them to receive him.

I Ask'd her; *How I might find the Holy Spirit? For I could not meet with an Aſſembly of Apoſtles, nor pray with them Forty Days, that I might receive him.*

She

She ſaid; Sir, you ſhall receive the Holy Spirit without being in the Company of the Apoſtles: For even they did not receive him in Fulneſs, (*a*) but in part only, and the Promiſe that Jeſus Chriſt made *to ſend us* (*b*) *the Holy Ghoſt; who ſhall teach us all things*, had not its full Accomplithment: For there were many things which the Apoſtles knew not; and there were alſo ſeveral Faults committed by them after having receiv'd the Holy Spirit. It is in theſe laſt times that the Holy Spirit comes, who ſhall teach us all things. If your Soul were wholy reſign'd to the Will of God, it wou'd be prepared to receive the Holy Spirit in Fulneſs: For his time is now come. Do you not even now feel ſome Rays of his Light by ſo many different things which I have told you in our ſo frequent Converſation; Do you not ſee that many of theſe things have not been known nor diſcovered in former times? Can you doubt that there is at preſent a *Treaſure hid* in the Earth, which begins to be diſcovered? From whence otherwiſe ſhou'd theſe precious Stones of the Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, come, the ſo fragrant Roſes of true Vertue, and ſo many new Notices which appear in our Eyes as Buds of Paradiſe? Wou'd you have a Holy Spirit viſible and carnal? Men ſince the Apoſtles Days have more Underſtanding of ſpiritual things. Therefore God has multiplied their Knowledge and refin'd their Underſtandings, that they may conceive the Light of the Holy Spirit by lively Reaſons and ſolid Truths; not by material Forms and Figures, which were given only for outward Signs, capable of being ſeen by the Eyes of Fleſh, which did not yet perceive thoſe things of the Spirit: For the Holy Spirit is not a Dove, nor Wind, nor Tongues of Fire; but an intelligible Spirit who makes us know God and our ſelves, and brings always along with him (*e*) his twelve Fruits, and his (*f*) ſeven Gifts, all which are ſpiritual, and cannot be ſeen no more than their Author, but by their Operations. This is the Holy Spirit which you ought to deſire, Sir, and not a viſible and material one. Reſign your ſelf to God, and you ſhall certainly receive him: For his Time is come. He is born upon the Earth in Spirit, as he was born in Fleſh in the Stable of *Bethlehem*.

(*a*) 1 *Cor.* 13. 9—12. (*b*) *John* 16. 13. (*c*) *Matth.* 13. 44. (*d*) *Dan.* 12. 4, (*e*) *Galat.* 5. 22. (*f*) *Iſa.* 11. 12.

I ſaid to her; *There were yet many Souls in the World as well as I, who earneſtly deſired to receive the Holy Spirit.*

She ſaid; Sir, every one will ſay that he wou'd receive him, but I know no body yet who wou'd effectually reſign his Will to God's and let himſelf be ruled and governed by him. We ſtill wiſh for this and that according to our Bent and Inclinations. We are ſorry for Adverſities. We do not willingly ſuffer Tribulations and Croſſes. We complain of Wrong and Affronts done us. We deſire to be honour'd, ſerv'd, and lov'd, and to have our Eaſe. In one Word, all our Life is a conſtant Tract of Self-love; and yet we ſay we are reſign'd to God; and if this were true, we wou'd have no longer ſelf-will, but that of God wou'd be our Rule and our Contentment, as well in Troubles, Adverſities and Derelictions, as in all ſort of Proſperity and Abundance: For regarding nothing but the Will of God, we wou'd receive all things with Joy: But as long as the one's too ſweet, and the other too ſalt to our Taſte, it's a ſign we yet live to our ſelves and are not reſign'd to God, nor ready to follow his Will, and ſo are not diſpos'd to receive the Holy Spirit, becauſe our ſelf-will hinders him: For he cannot operate in a Soul which is not diſengag'd from its own Will, which ſtill oppoſes the *Gifts* and *Fruits* of the Holy Spirit, and directly hinders his Operations. It's thus that I ſay I know no body, yet who'll be reſign'd to the Will of God, except in Words but not in Deed. Indeed we wou'd do God's Will as long as 'tis conformable to ours; but as ſoon as it oppoſes that, there's no more Submiſſion. We give God our Will as long as all goes right according to our Deſires and Wiſhes; but as ſoon as the contrary falls out, we take back this given Will to diſpoſe of it our ſelves: and thus we continue always full of ſelf-love, and yet we wou'd receive forſooth, the Holy Spirit to joyn him with our Filth and Imperfections to make a very unſutable Marriage, as that wou'd be of God with Sin (*g*) which are two incompatible things, as Heat and Cold, which can never dwell together. Yea, truly tho' there were nothing but the Sin of ſelf-love, it is a mortal Wound, againſt the Commandment of loving one God alone.

(*g*) 2 *Cor.* 6. 14, 15, 16.

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The Eleventh Conference.

How Man muſt reſign himſelf to God.

I Said to her; *That I would very willingly reſign my ſelf to God, and yield my ſelf to be entirely governed by him, and to follow all that I ſhall know to be his Will.*

She ſaid; Sir, this *Reſignation* has ſome *Exception* yet, and is not wholly diſengag'd: For if you wait till an Angel from Heaven come to make known to you what the Will of God is, you'll no ways be reſign'd to him; but you muſt take (*a*) all that befalls you for his Will, great or ſmall things, all comes from him, without excepting any thing: For if you are reſign'd to him, you'll have no longer Deſires of your own, and will no longer ſeek any thing: Therefore all that ſhall befal you, ſhall come by his Order; when you take it from his Hand, you can never fail, even tho' it were the Devil himſelf (*b*) or ſome wicked Creature did it: he'll never permit them to hurt you (*c*) but in ſo far as it ſhall be his Will. 'Tis true, a wicked Man has his Liberty, to do what Evil he pleaſes; but God has Power alſo to preſerve us that their Evils do not touch us: Or if he permit them to touch us, gives us Strength to (*d*) ſuffer them, and that with Joy; and ſo they can't wound us: For all worldly Good and Evil are for the moſt part but imaginary things; and when our Mind is brought to take Afflictions joyfully, they ſeem to us Contentments, and no longer Afflictions. This depends ſo ſtrongly upon our Imagination, that our Happineſs and Miſery ſeems to depend upon it. If we imagine that Riches are a Burden, Poverty will be a Repoſe to us. And thus it is of every other thing. Take confidently all that ſhall befal you for the Will of God; for otherwiſe that wou'd be but like a forc'd Reſignation which wou'd require to know preciſely on every Occaſion, if this were the Will of God or not. This Study or Application of Mind, is an Hindrance to a perfect Reſignation.

(*a*) *Job* 1. 11. 2. 10. *Rom.* 8. 29. (*b*) 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. (*c*) *Job* 1. 12. 2. 6. (*d*) *Phil.* 1. 29.

I ſaid to her; *That I would take all from God's Hand; and that I had often told her, that I yield my Will to him.*

She ſaid; 'Tis true, Sir, you have often ſaid it; but I doubt you have not done it; becauſe I obſerve often yet Oppoſitions in your Will. He that has gain'd a Place, does not fight againſt it any longer. Far better be a Conquerour than a Combatant. If your Will were given up to God, as you think, you wou'd not have it any longer: For a thing given, does not any longer belong to us. How cou'd your Will make Oppoſition then, if it truly belong'd to God? You cou'd not feel any Combats of that which you had not any longer: For if I had not a Hand, I could not ſuffer any Evil in it. We often ſay and think ſome Things that are not true. Reflect but a little ſeriouſly, Sir, upon all your Actions, and ſee if you'll not find that they are done by your own Will; Yea, even your own pious Exerciſes. Conſider a little if it wou'd not be a trouble to you to change or leave them by reaſon of ſome Accident which God ſhou'd permit to befal you. This is a Sign that they proceed from your own Will: For if they did proceed from the Will of God the abſtaining from them wou'd be as agreeable to you as the doing of them: For there is little on Earth, the Want of which does not give as much Honour to God as the Enjoyment of it; and a Will reſign'd to God, does no longer feel Self-contradiction: So that if ſuch a Soul were depriv'd of all ſort of Spiritual and Chriſtian Exerciſes by ſome Accident of War, Sickneſs or other Inconveniencies, which might happen, 'twou'd not ſo much as regret that it cou'd not perform them; becauſe God's Will wou'd be more dear to it than all the Contentment it might receive in the Performance of all its pious Duties: Yea, it wou'd think it ſelf in a more happy State; becauſe the Practices of Vertue brings along with them ſome Self-ſatisfactions and Pleaſures, which leſſens their Merits: For having receiv'd a Recompence in this World, we ought not to look for it in the other. Thus, Sir, you may ſee and obſerve, if it be true that you are reſign'd to God, not only in Spiritual things, but in all temporal Affairs. I believe you will not find one that is delivered from Self-Love or natural Inclinations.

I ask'd her; *How I could perfectly make this entire Reſignation to God without ever revoking it?*

She ſaid; Sir, reſign your ſelf to God in ſuch a manner as that you no longer follow your own Will in any thing: For (e) *He who is faithful in a few things, will be ſet over great things.*

(e) *Matth.* 25. 21.

things. Every Moment, and on all Occaſions, you may make a Sacrifice of your own Will: For it acts always. It will ſee, hear, walk, and do many other things that are not needful, and always for the Glory of God. In all this, you muſt deny it the Satisfaction of executing theſe ſort of Wills, which are unprofitable, and robb us of our time, that is ſo dear and precious: And if we muſt *render (f) an Account of every idle Word*, much more of idle Actions: And it ſhou'd never be ſaid that (*g*) *theſe are but ſmall things*: For God takes notice of ſmall things, ſince he ſays, that (*h*) *the Hairs of our Head are numbered*, and that the Leaf of a Tree ſhall not fall without his Permiſſion. It is becauſe God has given us this limited Time to do Penitence in, that he will exact an Account of it from us, even to a Moment, that it may appear wherein we employ it; and if we employ it in unprofitable Actions, according to our own Will, we are certainly to blame; becauſe we do not accompliſh the Penitence enjoyn'd us, and we apply the time allotted for it, in idle and unprofitable Actions. We ought, Sir, on this Occaſion, to deny our Will by way of Penitence, and to remember that we have given it to God, and that we our ſelves ought not any longer to diſpoſe of it; and by combating it thus, we ſhall certainly overcome it: For our Will is like a Horſe, which the Bridle turns whither we would lead him. If we yield it up to the good Will of God, we muſt conſtrain it to follow him in ſmall things as well as great, or otherwiſe it will endeavour to eſcape in Perils and Dangers, and from unprofitable things will fall into evil things. The beſt Curb is to put the Reins into God's Hands, that he may guide as it ſhall ſeem good to him, and never take them back again; becauſe we our ſelves have not enough of Wiſdom and Force to govern it: But he alone muſt guide it to its bleſſed End.

I ask'd her, *How I might accompliſh my Penitence, and how I might put in practice this Reſignation to God?*

She ſaid; Sir, we muſt chuſe no other Penance but that which God gives us. When we endure the Cold, and Heat, the Hunger, Thirſt, Wearineſs, Infirmities, and Diſeaſes, that it pleaſes God to ſend us, we muſt ſuffer them in the Spirit of Penitence; becauſe all wou'd not come upon us if it were not for Penance for Sin: For before it nothing troubled

(*f*) *Matth* 12. 36. (*g*) *Matth.* 10. 30.

us. All our Miſeries and Corruptions come by Sin, even the Vermine of our Body, the Lice, and all the other Beaſts engendered by Corruption, are produc'd by Sin; and therefore we muſt ſuffer them willingly, ſince this is the Penance which God has in Juſtice permitted to befal us inſtead of the Puniſhments due to our Sins. We ought not to invent Penances according to our Fancy, ſince God has enjoyn'd thoſe which he thinks fit, that is, to gain our Bread with the Sweat of our Face (*i*): ſo that all our Travels, Pains, and Labours, both of Body and Mind, are all ſatisfactory Penances enjoyn'd us by God himſelf: But the Penances choſen after our Fancy, are often invented by the Devil, who wou'd thereby drive us headlong, or at leaſt excite us to vain Glory; becauſe ordinarily thoſe who faſt or wear Sackcloth, are chagrin and preſumptuous, believing themſelves to be better than others, and that God is oblig'd to them for their good Works, as the *Phariſee* (*k*) who thanked God for his Righteouſneſs. All this proceeds from Self-love: But true Penitence conſiſts in taking patiently whatſoever God permits to befal us, either to our Body, Eſtate or Mind, and willingly to ſuffer it in the Spirit of Penitence, to ſatisfie for our Sins. This is the true Practice of the *RESIGNATION* of our Will to God: For every Moment there falls out Occaſions of Suffering and Submiſſion; ſo that we need not ſeek for them. It is only neceſſary that we practiſe this Reſignation of our Will to God for accompliſhing the ſaving Penitence which he has enjoyn'd us, and for the Exerciſe of all ſort of Vertues: For as ſoon as God ſhall be Maſter of our Will, he'll lead it to all good: ſo that we ſhall do no longer Evil, even in temporal things: For God will govern all with his Spirit of *Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth*, which can never fail in any thing. *Righteouſneſs* doing good to all and evil to none. Truth giving Light to diſcern all things and ſo to bring all to a good End. If you reſolve, Sir, truly to reſign your ſelf to God, you ſhall enjoy all this Happineſs; but as long as you act by your own Will, you'll ſpoil all, and ſhall not be ſaved.

I ſaid to her; *That this Way was ſo ſtreight, that one would be afraid to paſs through it; and that it would make one afraid that he could not be ſaved.*

(*i*) Gen 3. 16. (*k*) Luke 18. 11.

She ſaid; This Way is only a little ſtreight at the Beginning; but as ſoon as one has forc'd himſelf to depart from his own Will, 'tis then ſo large, free and pleaſant, that there can be nothing more agreeable: For the Soul which has reſign'd its Will to God, lives (*l*) like a Child, without Care: and tho' Heaven and Earth ſhou'd be overturned, ſhe is ſtill in Repoſe, and without Fear, knowing well that God who governs her, is able to preſerve her through all: She ſeeks no longer after any thing, knowing well that her God will ſtill provide for her; (*m*) She has no more Deſire after any thing; for ſhe finds in God a Satiety and perfect Satisfaction: She places her Hope no longer in any thing but the Promiſes of God. In ſhort, Sir, this is a Life wholly delightful and pleaſant, full of ſolid Contentment, which is not founded upon the Levity of Chances, or Changes of Men, but upon a permanent Stability: Whereas on the contrary, the Life of one who is governed after his own Will is very miſerable, and he walks continually upon the Briars and Thorns with which it is ſown: So that a Soul ſubject to to its own Paſſions furniſh him with a kind of Martyrdom. How many Vexations and Cares are there to ſatisfie this Self-will which often is unſatiable? The more 'tis ſatisfied, the leſs 'tis contented. How often does our Self-will throw us into irreparable Miſchiefs? It's ignorant, inconſtant, inſolent, haſty and enclin'd to all ſort of Evil; ſo that he who follows it, is oblig'd to lead a miſerable Life and to end it in an unhappy Death. It ſeems, Sir, you are, afraid yet of reſigning your ſelf to God, as if this Reſignation were a ſtreight Way, and troubleſome Life! when you ſee by ſo many Truths, that 'tis ſo ſweet and agreeable: and on the contrary, that which ſeems ſo pleaſant to you, is ſo painful and dangerous. All the Difficulty that you'll find to make this Reſignation, is no other thing but a Shadow which appears ſomething, and in Effect is nothing As ſoon as you ſhall turn away your Eyes from your ſelf, to look towards God, this Shadow of Apprehenſion will vaniſh, and you ſhall ſee it no more.

I ſaid to her; *That I was not ſo much afraid of reſigning my ſelf to God: For I wou'd willingly do it, but that in ſeveral Recounters ſhe had given me Occaſion to doubt of my Salvation.*

(*l*) *Pſ.* 36. 37, 5. (*m*) *Pſ.* 72. 73. 75.

She

She ſaid; Sir, do you love flattering Diſcourſes more than the Truth? If it be ſo, you may retire from me: For I am ſettled in the Truth, and I have no deſire to depart from it. I can make no Reflection whether it pleaſes or diſpleaſes my Hearers; but I am reſolved ſtill to obſerve it, tho' it wou'd coſt me my Life: For he who forſakes the Truth, forſakes God, which I will never do. I love rather to loſe the Favour of all the Men of the World, than to omit the Truth when I am oblig'd to ſpeak it: But ſetting aſide this Obligation, I can very well hold my Peace; becauſe Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid, *that Pearls ſhould not be caſt before Swine.* If the Truths that I have told you beget Scruple in you, 'tis a ſign that you are not reſolved to be ſav'd: For otherwiſe you wou'd greatly rejoyce to underſtand the Truth. Thoſe who are called (*n*) *Swine* in the Goſpel, are Men who make a Dunghil of the Roſes of true Vertue, or of the Pearls of the Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. Thoſe hidden Secrets are precious Stones; and he makes a Dunghil of them who ſays that they are imaginary or contriv'd things, or Hereſies. All theſe Sentiments make a Dunghil of the Pearls which are preſented to them, and according to the Counſel of Jeſus Chriſt, they ought not to be told to ſuch, but to thoſe who value them as they merit. And when yor tell me that I give you occaſion to doubt of your Salvation, by ſpeaking of true and ſolid Vertue; it ſeems you wou'd alſo make a Dunghil of its Roſes. I have told you the Truth, *That no body ſhall be ſaved but he who of his free Reſolution, reſigns his Will to God's, and denys his own.* You need not therefore doubt of your Salvation, if ſo be you will do this, Sir; but if you will not, doubt confidently of your Salvation: For you ſhall never obtain it. This Doubting is good if thereby you take a Reſolution to ſearch for the means of your Converſion: For (*o*) *the Fear of God is the Beginning of true Wiſdom.* If you be not in Fear as to your Salvation, you will preſume of it, and therefore will beſure of your Damnation: Becauſe he who preſumes to have it, uſes no Endeavours to obtain it, but dies in a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Therefore it is a great Advantage that I have made you doubt of your Salvation, ſince this Doubt will certainly lead you to Salvation.

(*n*) *Matth.* 7. 6. (*o*) *Prov.* 1. 7.

I ſaid to her; *That I deſired indeed to have the Fear of God, and of my Salvation; but that I ſaw my ſelf ſo far from this perfect Reſignation, that it ſeem'd to me I could never attain to it.*

She ſaid; Sir, that is nothing but a panick Fear; becauſe there is no Ground to fear what we wou'd willingly do. If you have been reſolved in it for ſo long a time paſt, ſuffer not the Devil to tempt you now: For there is no more Difficulty at preſent than the firſt Day you had the Will to do it. Be not carried away by imaginary things which are nothing but Amuſements. Fix on the Reality of the thing. You perceive clearly that you have a Free-Will and Choice and that by this you act in all things. It is by it you go from one Place to another: It is it that deſires to ſee and hear: It makes you covet or pretend to Wealth, Places, or Honours: It is it alſo that deſires Pleaſures and Proſperities: It is it likewiſe that wou'd rule over others, and cannot ſuffer from any: It is it that deſires its Eaſe and Repoſe with many other things for our Advantage: It is always our ſelf-will, that Works in us without ceaſing. This being diſcovered, there is nothing more to be done, but to interdict and forbid it theſe Operations, to the end it may let God work (p) alone in us what it ſhall pleaſe him; and then there will be nothing more to fear: For when we ſhall attain to this ſo much deſired Reſignation, there is nothing more to be feared: For God who will rule us, will give us all things. Does this ſeem difficult to you, Sir, that you doubt you cannot attain to it? There is nothing to do here, but to ceaſe: For God does then all in us. There is nothing neceſſary but to reſt: For this Reſignation conſiſts not in Actions, but in Omiſſions. The Practice of it is ſo ſweet that there's nothing more deſirable. All conſiſts in taking care not to let our own Will act: And ſo often as we perceive that it is enclin'd to any thing to Bridle it, and to ſay to it, *Ceaſe; for God only ought to move thee.* Is not this a ſweet Exercíſe, upon which notwithſtanding our Salvation depends? For if it depended upon wearing Sackcloth, taking Diſcipline to our ſelves, Faſting, Watching, or other troubleſome things, we wou'd have ground to ſay and to fear that we cou'd not attain to it: but when we muſt only reſign our Will to God, no body can excuſe himſelf, without Hazard of periſhing.

(p) *Heb.* 13. 21.

THE

The Twelfth Conference.

Of diſcerning the Motions of God from thoſe of Nature, wich muſt be done by Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth, which are three divine Qualities, according to which, all our Motions and all our Actions ought be regulated with great Care.

I *Ask'd her, how I might know when my own Will acted, that I might make it ceaſe?*

She ſaid; Sir, as often as it is led to any thing that is evil, or very unprofitable, it is certainly always our ſelf-will: Becauſe God cannot encline it to ſuch things: And when we ſeek our Honour, Pleaſure or Profit, this alſo proceeds from our ſelf-will: For God will never give any ſuch Deſires. Indeed he permits them ſometimes to befal us; but he will never make us ſeek or deſire them. Therefore if we have a ſerious Application of Spirit, we will remark preſently if it be God or our ſelf-will that acts in us: For God can never move it but to good, or neceſſary things; and will never make our Will act but what ſhall be for his Glory, or for the ſaving Good of our Neighbour. Nothing elſe can come from God, but from our ſelf-will, which is wholly deprav'd, and ought never to do any thing for it ſelf; for it ſpoils all. It were better to make it ceaſe without any more ado than to let it act alone and without God: Becauſe we preſume often that we have done many good Works, which *(a)* will be found to be evil and condemned by God: becauſe our ſelf-will was corrupted from the Beginning of the World in *Adam*, and is yet more corrupted by our own actual Sins: ſo that it is not capable of moving it ſelf but to Evil, and not at all to Good. This may be very eaſily obſerved: For we feel always in our ſelves ſome Inclination to do Evil: And

(a) Luk. 18. 14.

if

if it were not reſtrain'd or bridled by Reaſon or Vertue, we wou'd do nothing without Sin, or which did not ſavour of its Corruption: For if we ſpeak, it will be ſtill with an Inclination to augment what is for our Liking or Advantage, or to excuſe our Faults: ſo that naturally, we wou'd never abide in the ſtreight Truth: And if we converſe or do Buſineſs with our Neighbour, it will be ſtill with a Spirit of Covetouſneſs, either of Wealth, Honour or Pleaſure: ſo that all our own Bents and Inclinations are carried always to Evil, unleſs we be habituated by Vertue or good Breeding, not to follow Lying, Rapine or Deceit, nor the Spirit of Covetouſneſs.

I ask'd her, *By what means I might diſcover if it be God that moves my Will in all my daily Actions?*

She ſaid; Sir, there are certain Marks whereby to know when theſe Motions come from God; becauſe they are always accompanied with *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth*, which Qualities are ſtill inſeparable from God's Spirit *(b)* who never changes, but abides always righteous, good, and true; and therefore cannot move to any Actions, Words or Thoughts, but thoſe which are accompanied with theſe three Conditions or Qualities. Therefore when we feel our ſelves moved to undertake any thing whatſoever, we muſt always bend our Mind to remark our Undertaking 'ere we begin it, and ſee if it reſpect the Glory of God, or the ſaving Good of our Neighbour: And if ſo, we may perſue our Undertaking; but by means that are juſt, good and true: For elſe we may be yet miſtaken, thinking that it was for the Glory of God, and the Good of our Neighbour, when it was only our own Will and Inclination. For a Motion that comes from God, is ſtill accompanied with Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth; and if we muſt lye or be unjuſt, or hurt our Neighbour that we may attain to our Pretenſions, however they may be good in themſelves, yet nevertheleſs they are not of God. That we may follow the Motions of God, we muſt always obſerve this Rule, to remark in all our Actions, whether ſmall or great, if they are accompanied with Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth: And if all theſe together are not to be found in them, we muſt ſtill reject them as evil things, and produc'd by our ſelf-will: For God will never move to any

(b) Eph. 5. 9.

thing

thing how ſmall ſoever it be if it be not juſt, good and true. This is the true Touch-ſtone whereby to diſcover when Motions come from God: We need not conſult Oracles, but examine well if our Works be diſintereſſed from all our own Advantages, and if they be juſt, good and true.

I ask'd her, *If my ſelf-will might not mingle with the Divine Motions?*

She ſaid; Yes, Sir, our ſelf-will does very readily mingle with the Motions from God. By this many Saints have committed great Faults. This falls out when we are not wholly diſengaged from our ſelves, and Nature does yet live with Grace: Notwithſtanding it is eaſie to diſcover it when we are not precipitate in any thing, and when we take time to examine narrowly what we do, to ſee if it be juſt, and good and true. Then there's nothing to be fear'd whether our own will mingle there or not. It's God always is juſt, good and true. Our Nature being transform'd in him, does the ſame Functions of Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth. Therefore St. *Paul* ſaid, (c) *It is no longer I that live, but Jeſus Chriſt lives in me*: becauſe the Soul which is reſigned to God, does ſo habituate it ſelf to his Will, that it always becomes one (d) and the ſame thing with it: ſo that its own Will, being purged from it ſelf, moves no longer but by God: So that the Motions of the Soul and thoſe of God become the ſame thing, and they can no longer be diſtinguiſhed; becauſe the Soul cannot now do any thing but what is juſt, good and true, unleſs it ſhould depart from its Union with God, and during this Straying ſhould follow its own Will: In this caſe it may do amiſs, and not otherwiſe: But for you, Sir, you are not yet habituated to this Union; examine ſtill whether what you think, ſpeak or do, be *juſt*, *good* and *true*. With this you cannot be miſtaken, even tho' your own Inclination ſhou'd incite you to do things which have thoſe three Qualities of God: They are always of him, tho' the Devil himſelf ſhou'd move them; becauſe there is nothing juſt, good and true which is not of God; becauſe he only is juſt, only good and only true: And by theſe Marks you will certainly diſcern your own Motions from thoſe of God; and even tho' they were but mingled with them, there wou'd ſtill be ſomething evil, or unjuſt, or untrue, and then you muſt purge your Works from this Malignity, or elſe omit them altogether.

(c) *Gal.* 2. 20. (d) 1 *Cor.* 6. 17.

I told her, *That I had yet one Doubt; that is, whether I ought to do or omit the Works in which I perceived not preciſely theſe three Qualities, of Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth; whether the Works were indifferent or neceſſary, or out of Complaiſance.*

She ſaid; Sir, you ought to do all neceſſary Works when they cannot be eaſily done by others; And for thoſe which are indifferent, to do them, is but to loſe time. They muſt either be unprofitable or have ſome end. If this end does not reſpect the Glory of God, take good heed of miſ-ſpending time, which is ſo precious. Never be perſuaded of this Indifference; becauſe under that Name we often do evil things without being aware of it. We can never do indifferent things, except very ſubtilly, before we reflect upon what we are doing: For otherwiſe all our Actions, how ſmall ſoever they be, have ſome Scope at which they aim: And as for Works of Complaiſance, they are forbidden by Jeſus Chriſt, when he ſays, (e) *that he who ſeeks to pleaſe Men, is not the Servant of Jeſus Chriſt*, unleſs your Complaiſance aim at ſome good or neceſſary End: Otherwiſe every Deed of Complaiſance is vain and evil. Reſolve, Sir, to do thoſe things only, which have the Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth of God: For all others are to be ſuſpected, and bring no Glory to God, nor ſaving Good to our Neighbour; and ſeeing you wou'd follow Jeſus Chriſt (f) *ſeek thoſe things which are above, and not thoſe which are upon the Earth*, which muſt very quickly periſh. It is better (g) *to lay up Treaſures for Heaven, where the Ruſt does not corrupt*: For tho' you ſhou'd gain here the Friendſhip of all the Men of the World by your Works of Complaiſance, they cannot give you any thing. One Degree of the Glory of God is of more worth than ten thouſand Worlds. Endeavour, Sir, to labour for this, or be ſtill. Make no more fruitleſs Labour: For all that is not of God, is nothing, and God alone is all permanent Good.

I ſaid to her; *That I had not made this ſerious Reflection to remark if all my Actions were accompanied with Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth, but that I did them often without thinking on any thing, if I did not remark in them any of my own Wickedneſs.*

(e) *Gal.* 1. 10. (f) *Col.* 3. 1, 2. (g) *Matth.* 6. 20.

She ſaid; Sir, you do therefore commit many Faults, both in reſpect of this preſent World, and that to come. For by proceeding inconſiderately, it is certain you act only according to the Motions of Nature, which being corrupted, can do nothing that's good. After this manner, your good Actions are but humane, and will end with you: this is a very prejudicial Ignorance not to know that all the Works which we do naturally, ſhall not be rewarded before God, and that all their Reward is received in this World. Many Perſons have done many ſuch good Works who notwithſtanding ſhall never be ſav'd: And even tho' they ſhou'd(*b*) ſuffer Martyrdom by natural Motions, this wou'd profit them nothing; becauſe to partake of Eternal Life, all muſt have the Righteouſneſs of God: For finite things cannot come to be infinite. Now all our Works which do not partake of God, are finite, and cannot reach Eternity; becauſe they have not theſe Eternal Ends, but Natural or Temporal ones. In this many do greatly deceive themſelves, looking for Salvation by Works ſimply Humane or Natural, believing that all Works are good when they are not accompanied with our deſigned Malice. It's thus before Men who judge only according to the Reach of their ſhort Sight: But the clear-ſeeing Eyes of God do judge according to Eternal Truth and Righteouſneſs. Therefore we muſt endeavour to do our Actions according to theſe, elſe we ſhall remain empty-handed at Death. It's not enough that we ceaſe to do evil: we muſt alſo do well, or otherwiſe we ſhall fall into the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is a Preſumption of being ſaved without good Works; and none can be called *good*, if they bear not the *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth* of God. His Righteouſneſs does every juſt thing, both as to our ſelves and our Neighbour. His Goodneſs does good to all and evil to none. His Truth is always ſtreight and ſingle; and when our Actions are not accompanied with theſe three Conditions, they don't proceed from God but from our Nature, or the Suggeſtions of the Devil, who willingly covers his moſt ſubtil Temptations with ſeeming Good that he may make every one believe they ſhall be ſaved without good Works, by making them eſteem their Natural and Temporary Works to be good.

(*b*) 1 *Cor.* 13. 3.

I ſaid to her; *I ſhould have great Difficulty to apply my ſelf ſo as to remark always whether my Actions had theſe three Qualities, and if they were only divine Motions.*

She ſaid; Sir, if you do not this, you'll loſe all your Reward, and will alſo occaſion the Damnation of many others, while you think you are doing good Works. For Example; you ſee ſome one in Want: Your Nature is mov'd with Compaſſion towards him: Without more Reflection you give him of your Goods, either what is ſuperfluous, or even what you need your ſelf; and you believe you do a Work of Charity. Nevertheleſs it may be ill done: For if you don't conſider from whence the Poverty of that Man proceeds, you'll often occaſion his Condemnation: For your Gifts may ſerve him for means to offend God; as, if he be enclined to drink, your Alms will lead him to new Acts of Drunkenneſs; or if he have a proud and haughty Heart, by your Gift he'll be the more puffed up, employing it upon ſumptuous Apparel or other Vanities to nouriſh his Pride and his Boaſting, or to commit other Exceſſes to which he's addicted, of Luxury, Arrogance or Contempt of his Equals. In ſhort, this Good that you think you have done him, will often occaſion divers ſort of Evils to this your Neighbour, and alſo to your ſelf, in caſe you have need of what you have given him: For *Charity* well order'd begins always at ones ſelf; and he who ſhould give his Goods to another, and leave his own Debts unpaid, wou'd commit Robbery, by taking from him to whom 'tis due, to give it to another out of tender Compaſſion. Therefore I ſay we muſt always obſerve whether our Works be accompanied with Righteouſneſs, remarking whether this neceſſitous Perſon wou'd do any ſaving Good with our Gifts, whether they would draw him out of ſpiritual and bodily Miſeries, whether he ſhall not abuſe them by employing them to do evil: Then the Giving him will be accompanied with the Righteouſneſs of God, provided you have what is ſuperfluous to give him: But when you have only pure Neceſſaries, 'tis not juſt to give them to others unleſs they be in ſome Extremity of Want: Then you muſt ſuccour your Neighbour as much as you are able, yet without caſting your ſelf into the Extremity from whence you wou'd bring another: For this wou'd neither be juſt nor good: For a Man ſhou'd never ruine himſelf voluntarily: This is to do an ill thing and againſt the Goodneſs of God. To do therefore a Work of *Charity* that has the Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth of God ſtamp'd upon it, we muſt firſt ſee if it be true

that the Perſon whom we wou'd aſſiſt is really poor: This is the Truth of God: For there are now ſo many Cheats and Lyes, that the moſt part of the Poor are ſo thro' their own Fault; becauſe they will not work or they are prodigal and Cheats, or they will not manage, but are careleſs of the Goods that God has beſtowed on them. In all theſe Caſes the Perſon is not truly poor; and therefore we cannot find the Truth of God in our Alms, neither can we therein find his Goodneſs: becauſe it would be ill for the Salvation of him to whom we give it: Neither would it have his Righteouſneſs; for it would not be juſt to feed by Alms any in their Sloth, or in other Sins of Gluttony or Careleſneſs. You ſee clearly, Sir, that it is neceſſary to remark always by what Spirit we do our Actions; or elſe we ſhall commit great Faults without perceiving them. If you find ſome Difficulty in this ſerious Reflection, yet this ſhould not make you omit it: For our Salvation, and that of our Neighbour does well deſerve all this Trouble. If ſo many Men of Wit and Quality do ſo earneſtly ſtudy to render themſelves honeſt, civil and accompliſh'd in the Eyes and Judgment of Men, how much more ought you to do to render your ſelf ſuch in the Sight of God. This Difficulty will be well rewarded by your Salvation, and that of ſo many others: Whereas theſe Perſons are often obliged to bow their Wills as Reeds at the Will of thoſe whom they honour; who nevertheleſs can give them nothing but periſhing Things, either ſome Breath of Honour or tranſient Pleaſures, or ſome Riches that periſh by a Turn of Fortune; and yet for this they force and torment themſelves exceedingly. Sir, let other Mens Folly make you wiſe. Study as much to gain the Favour of God as they do to have that of Men; For your eternal Happineſs depends upon it. You can never follow God if you do not embrace his Truth. Without it all your Works are vain and temporal, ending with your ſelf.

I told her, *That I would abſolutely ſtudy from henceforth to become agreeable to God, but that I never yet had Light enough to diſcern in all my Actions, whether the Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth of God was to be found in them.*

She ſaid; Sir, this comes from no other thing but Inconſideration of Mind: For if it would apply it ſelf, it would certainly know all that it ought to do and omit, more clearly than your Eyes perceive, ſenſible Objects. Apply only the Underſtanding that God has given you for the Perfection of your Soul, and you ſhall learn all things. As ſoon as you

you (*i*) ſhall firmly reſolve to ſeek no longer for any thing upon Earth, but only to ſeek the Glory of God, you ſhall obtain the Light of the Holy Spirit which will teach you all things. There is nothing to be feared on this Occaſion but the Bent that we have to the Earth, which if we follow, we ſhould ſoon loſe the Star which ſhou'd guide us to the Place where God dwells. Therefore I exhort you never more to look behind you, nor to aim at any thing on Earth: For all that we can ſee or hope for here, are but Chains and Bands to withdraw us from God, our alone Saviour: Therefore, Sir, forſake your ſelf and all things: For they are Enemies of your true Good. The Love we bear to Men, hinders us from the Love of God, and the Love of our ſelves renders us his Enemies; which Things ſtifle in our Soul the Light of the Holy Spirit. But if we are reſolved to ſeek and love no longer any thing but the Glory of God, we ſhall ſoon perceive, if what we ſpeak, think or do, be for this Glory or not, by the leaſt Diligence or Care to do it. Only you muſt be firm in your Reſolution, that you will do nothing but what ſhall be for this Glory, and thruſt far from you all other things as unworthy of your Pretenſions. Then ſhall we walk with a ſteady Pace, and ſhall no longer do any thing but what ſhall have theſe three Qualities of the Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth of God: For all that is for his Glory, brings ſtill theſe Conditions along with it his Glory being inſeparable from his Eſſence, his Eſſence from his Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth, nothing can be wanting there any longer.

(*i*) *John* 7. 17. (*k*) *Jam.* 4. 4.

The Thirteenth Conference.

That Perſons illuminated by God, may ſerve as powerful Means for Salvation; but it's God only who can give it; and that now the Company of Men is dangerous.

I Said to her; *That all theſe things were true; but that my Soul was not yet purified enough to diſcover them ſo preciſely and that her Company was neceſſary for me that I might learn to practiſe that Righteouſneſs Goodneſs and Truth.*

She ſaid; Sir, I believe indeed my Company may ſerve you as a Mean to preſerve you on Occaſions; but it is not neceſſary for this: For God alone is ſufficient (*a*) who'll guide you thro' all, provided you continue firmly faithful to him: For you know not me yet; and if you knew me, you wou'd ſee in my Practice all the things that I tell you by Word. My Thoughts, Words and Deeds, muſt have the three Qualities of which I have ſpoken to you; elſe I ſhou'd be like the Braſs that ſounds outwards, and has nothing within it ſelf. I have remarked that you have not yet diſcovered theſe Truths; and therefore my Converſation would be uſeleſs to you, and a great Hindrance to me: For you not perceiving God in my Words and Works, would not follow them, and you would hinder me from hearing God perfectly. It is true, you do me no hurt when you look upon my Actions as Humane; but you cannot profit by them. It were much better that you ſought God purely, and leave me alone to enjoy him more particularly: Becauſe the leaſt Unprofitableneſs does always darken the Soul. I have ſpoken to you of many different Things which may give you Light into the Secrets of God and your own Salvation and particular Perfection. There remains only to put them in Practice. Read the Holy Scriptures, they will confirm you in all that I have told you, and give Credit to nothing but the Truth

(*a*) *Pſ.* 73. 23, 24, 25.

of

of the Goſpel, be he who he will that ſpeaks to you. * For *all Men are Lyars*: And if I ſhou'd ſay things contrary to the Goſpel, do not believe me: For you ought not to believe any thing becauſe I ſay it to you, but only becauſe it is really true: And if you knew me, you ſhould alſo know God; becauſe (*b*) he is one and the ſame Spirit in all things. So far as you ſhall diſcern Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth in any Perſon, ſo far ſhall you diſcern God living in them, and no farther. So that it's never good to follow Perſons for themſelves, but to follow the *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth* which you ſhall diſcover to abide in them. Therefore it's not needful to have their bodily Preſence, it's enough to accompany them with Spirit and Will in their Righteouſneſs.

I ſaid to her, *That ſhe ought not to deprive me of her Company, ſince it gave me ſo much Light and good Purpoſes, and that I heard her Diſcourſes as proceeding from the Holy Spirit; but that I had not as yet ſtrength enough to put them in Practice: that I would be conſtrained to accompany ſome other Perſon; becauſe I could not ſtay alone.*

She ſaid; Sir, if you do this you are undone: For now you'll meet with no body in the World that poſſeſſes theſe three Qualities of *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth*; and conſequently you ſeek in vain among Men what you will certainly find with God, from whom Men will divert you, and fill your Mind with their own Idea's and Imaginations, enticing you to follow them. Tho' they are not in the Truth, yet they think they are, and willingly draw over every one to their Errours, while they even believe they are doing well. Be on your Guard, Sir, for we are fallen into the dangerous Times foretold by Jeſus Chriſt, wherein (*c*) *Many falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, and ſhall deceive many.* Obey theſe Warnings, and let not your ſelf be deceived: For many come in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, who are in League with Satan, and do deceive many. Remember ſtill that we live now in the Reign of Antichriſt, and that God (*d*) at his Coming finds no more Faith in *Iſrael*, that is, among his People; For all have denied him. Faith conſiſts in the Belief of the Promiſes and Word of God. Who is there now a-days that hears his Word, and acts according to it? The

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* *Pſ.* 116. 11. (*b*) 1 *Cor.* 6. 17. (*c*) *Matth.* 24. 11. (*d*) *Luke* 18. 8.

Chriſtians are the People of God, nevertheleſs none of them has Faith: For if they did believe in one only God, they wou'd not make ſo many Idols, that each one has his particular Idol; One makes an Idol of his Wealth, another of his Honour, another of his Wiſdom, and ſo of all other things, which they adore and eſteem. So that none has any longer Faith to believe that there is but one only true God, whom we ought to worſhip, nor yet the other things which God taught us by his holy Prophets, his Apoſtles and Jeſus Chriſt himſelf. The Church has no longer Faith to believe that all theſe things muſt be practiſed in order to Salvation. Theſe ſeem to be but Stories of the ancient Times, and that it's not neceſſary now to put them in Practice: So that the word is now fulfilled, which ſays that when the Lord ſhall come, he ſhall not find Faith in *Iſrael.* He is come and he finds no Faith in his People. Therefore, take good heed, Sir, of applying to any body; becauſe there is no Faith now among Chriſtians, but many Deceivers and Seducers. Continue rather alone, or follow me yet a little.

The Fourteenth Conference.

That the Habit does not make the Monk, *and that* Religions *of themſelves make none holy. Of the Corruption of them and of the Church.*

I Asked her, *How it was poſſible that there ſhould be no longer Faith in* Iſrael, *and yet ſo great a Number profeſs the true Faith, and in particular, ſo many devote themſelves to God in Cloyſters and Monaſteries, that they may the better obſerve the Word of God, and the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt.*

She ſaid; It's true, Sir, a great many profeſs to be Chriſtians, but notwithſtanding they are not ſo. While you converſed in the World, did you obſerve any that followed the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt that denied himſelf, that choſe the laſt Place or the leaſt when he might have a better, and ſo many other things taught and obſerved by Jeſus Chriſt? I know indeed you will anſwer me, No: And I ask you if there can be other Chriſtians than thoſe which follow his Doctrine?

ctrine? They call none a *Calviniſt* but he who follows the Doctrine of *Calvin*; nor a *Lutheran* but he who follows the Doctrine of *Luther*: And why wou'd they reckon thoſe (*a*) to be Chriſtians who don't follow the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. They bear the Title falſly, and they lye to the Holy Ghoſt: For they are not Chriſtians before God, if they do not obſerve the Doctrine of the Goſpel. They but flatter themſelves to believe it, and deceive themſelves to doubt it. Do you need any other Evidence, Sir, than your own Underſtanding, which ſees and comprehends clearly enough that theſe who are now called Chriſtians do not follow Jeſus Chriſt, neither in his Doctrine nor in his Works, and that they are not Chriſtians but in Word and in Picture, having nothing of true Chriſtianity, neither following Chriſt at a diſtance, nor near at hand? On the contrary, their Lives and Manners are directly oppoſite to the Life and Manners which Jeſus Chriſt laid before us for an Example, when he lived upon Earth. Nevertheleſs you ask me if it be poſſible to believe that there is no longer Faith in *Iſrael*: And I ask How is it poſſible to believe that there are yet Chriſtians upon Earth?

I ſaid to her; *That they who retire from the World to become Religious or enter into Cloyſters, ought preciſely to follow Jeſus Chriſt, ſince they make ſolemn and particular Vows.*

She ſaid; Sir, do you not ſee that theſe Vows are not well obſerv'd? They vow *Chaſtity*, *Poverty* and *Obedience*. Remark if this be obſerved in the Cloyſters or among the *Monks*. Theſe are only outward things which ſeem as little obligatory as Baptiſm ſeems: For neither the one nor the other is obſerved; and after the outward Ceremonies are performed, they do not think any longer on the Promiſes they've made to God: Every one lives according to his Inclinations. Religious Vows are as it were a ſecond Baptiſm, or a Confirmation of it; becauſe they enter into a Religious Life that they may renounce the World, its Pomps and Vanities as they had promiſed in Baptiſm: And when they have taken the Habit, and made Vows, they love the World more than they did before. There is often greater Pomp and Vanity under the mean Habit of a Religious Perſon than under the Purple of a King. Who does not perceive the Heart of thoſe Perſons puffed up, becauſe they have the

(*a*) 2 *John* 9.

Name of Saints or vertuous Ones? It ſeems all the World ſhou'd do them Honour and Reverence; becauſe of their mean Habits which People kiſs kneeling, with more Reverence than they worſhip God. They get the Titles of Venerable, Reverences, moſt illuſtrious. In ſhort, Sir, it cannot be true that theſe Perſons have renounced the World, ſince they deſire to be lov'd, honour'd and eſteem'd by it. On the contrary, in their Religious State they do often require more worldly Honour than wou'd have belonged to them, if they had remained Seculars. Does it not hereby appear that there are no where any true Chriſtians, and that all Chriſtianity now conſiſts only in outward *Idea's*? For no body renounces the Devil, the World and its Pomps, tho' all have promiſed it in Baptiſm: And tho' they have confirmed theſe Promiſes by Religious Vows, yet they are not more careful of one Obligation than the other. This may be concluded even from the Deeds and Practices of all thoſe Religious Votaries.

I ſaid to her; *That at leaſt, the Religious did follow Jeſus Chriſt at a diſtance.*

She ſaid; She knew not one thing in which they follow'd Jeſus Chriſt: For all their Practices were contrary to him: For he ſaid, (b) *Learn of me who am meek and lowly in Heart*; and theſe are proud and arrogant. He was poor throughout his whole Life, and theſe deſire to be rich. He had not where to lay his Head, whereas theſe have all ſorts of Conveniences, building Houſes as if they were to dwell here for ever. Jeſus Chriſt did ſtill labour, ſweat, toil and ſuffer in this Life; whereas theſe *Monks* will live at eaſe, without labouring or ſuffering any thing. Jeſus Chriſt choſe Reproach, Contempt and Confuſion; whereas theſe make themſelves to be honour'd by all, taking to themſelves the firſt Place, chuſing ſtill the fineſt and the beſt: whereas Jeſus Chriſt did always chuſe the leaſt, tho' he was the Lord and Creator of all things. He choſe a poor Mother, Apoſtles from among the Common-People, a Stable to be born in, and a Gibbet to die upon. Do you think, Sir, that there is any Reſemblance between the Life of the *Monks* and that which Jeſus Chriſt taught us by his Example? For my part I can't perceive any thing in which they follow Jeſus Chriſt, neither cloſely nor at a diſtance: For even all their Outſide is

(b) *Matth.* 11. 29.

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directly contrary to him. The pompous Ornaments of their Houſes and Churches do ſhew the Vanity of their Hearts: For he who is not vain, ſeeks nothing but what is neceſſary. Theſe Superfluities are real Evidences of it; For he who is not luxurious (or loves not Luxuries) will never heap up Treaſures upon Earth. All that *Gold*, *Silver*, *Silk* and thoſe other Ornaments, are all worldly Pomps which they renounced in Baptiſm, and ſince in making Religious Vows. Nevertheleſs every one endeavours to heap up more. Is not this to mock God, to make falſe Promiſes to him, which we have no Mind to keep? For thoſe who at preſent enter into a Religious Life, have no Deſign to follow Jeſus Chriſt: But on the contrary, many enter therein, that they may be provided, and have their Conveniencies and Pleaſures, or that they may be free of the Cares and Troubles of maintaining their *Families* if they ſhou'd live in the World, or for ſome Reaſons which are for their Profit: All which nevertheleſs are covered with a Pretence of following Jeſus Chriſt, tho' they will or deſire nothing leſs than this.

I ſaid to her; *That ſome of them did ſincerely enter into a Religious ſtate; being perſuaded that hereby they ſhall more really imitate Jeſus Chriſt.*

She ſaid; I bewail theſe, Sir, who go thither upon ſo good Deſigns; becauſe they cannot put them in Execution in theſe Societies at preſent, who are eſtabliſhed more for their own Profit than according to the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. How many have entered into them who have been diſintereſſed from worldly things, and they have learned them to covet and ſeek them? If a *Monk* know not the way to bring the Water to their *Mill*, they will caſt him off as unprofitable for the Good of Religion. So that to obſerve his Vows aright, he muſt ſtudy to be covetous rather than poor. I doubt not but there are yet ſeveral particular Perſons among the Religious Orders who have a ſincere Intention to pleaſe God; but they are ſo blinded with the Reaſons and Arguments of others that they follow their Vices inſenſibly, without perceiving it, becauſe theſe Vices are changed as to their Name, and they call them Vertues: For the *Pride*; *Luxury* and *Avarice* of theſe Perſons are called by the Name of *Charity*. Their Hearts will be full of theſe three Vices; and to make them paſs with others for Vertues, they will perſuade them that they ought to procure to themſelves, Honour, as being the Servants of God, or Prieſts conſecrated to him; and that therefore all Honour is due to them, that God may be

honour'd

honour'd by them. Thoſe well-meaning Perſons believe this to be true, and follow others blindly, without reflecting upon the Behaviour of Jeſus Chriſt, his Apoſtles and Diſciples, who were deſpiſed by the World: For Jeſus Chriſt ſays that he is (c) *the Reproach of Men*; and when they wou'd have honour'd the Apoſtles for the great Miracles they wrought upon the Sick, they ſaid, (d) *ſee that you do it not for we are Men like to your ſelves; we do theſe Wonders in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, who ought to be honoured and glorified, and not we who can do nothing.* Now theſe at preſent aſcribe all Honour to themſelves, making the World believe that it is Charity to give them Goods wherewith to maintain their Luxury, as well in their Movables and Buildings as in the Ornaments of the Altars under Colour, that 'tis the Houſe of God which deſerves all good and fine things, as if God were honoured by their Luxury and Superfluities, which are ſo well maſqu'd that the moſt Pious follow them without conſidering that neither Jeſus Chriſt nor his Apoſtles did ever build magnificent Temples or Houſes, but followed a plain Simplicity. Can God be honoured by the Sins of Luxury and Exceſs? He who being in the World did chuſe Poverty and Miſery! Thus he wou'd be indeed a changing God if he ſhou'd now glory in the Magnificence of Temples, Houſes and Ornaments, who wou'd neither have the one nor the other, tho' he was Lord and Creator of all things. If the Glory of his Father had conſiſted in Churches and ſumptuous Ornaments, wou'd not he to whom all appertains, have pitch'd upon them and built them? What Dotages do Men now publiſh, that God is honoured by great Buildings and rich Ornaments! So our Dung ſhou'd be his Honour: For (e) all that is fair and good in the Sight of Men is nothing but Dung before God. We have renounced the Pomps of the World that we might become the Children of God; and by the ſame Pomps we wou'd honour him in his Churches! It is not fit to renounce the Pomps of the World to become Chriſtians, ſince theſe give Glory to God. It had been better to encreaſe theſe, ſince they honour God, that by the Encreaſe of them, God might receive Encreaſe of Glory. What Blindneſs of Mind is it, Sir, that makes Men believe that God is honoured by worldly Pomps when they are applied to

(c) *Pſ.* 22. 7. (d) *Acts* 3. 12, 16. 10. 26. 14. 15. *Pſ.* 115. 1. (e) *Luke* 16. 15.

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Church-Walls. If they diſpleaſe God in the Souls of Chriſtians, how much more ſhou'd they diſpleaſe him in Churches and Places that are peculiarly dedicated unto him for Prayer, ſince this does ſtill require Attention, and theſe pompous and magnificent Ornaments ſerve for nothing but to diſtract and divert the Mind by regarding theſe Pomps and Ornaments of Churches which do certainly diſtract the Mind of all thoſe who regard them, and can ſerve for nothing but to ſatisfie the Avarice of thoſe who covet them. Nevertheleſs they call thoſe charitable who afford them Money wherewith to provide all theſe Pomps and Ornaments of Churches. Every one praiſes and eſteems them, as if God were a vain God, who wou'd be adorn'd with fine Garments. If he wou'd have a rich Temple in *Solomon*'s time, it was becauſe People were then ſo groſs, that they cou'd comprehend nothing of God or of his Majeſty, but by groſs and material things. But now that we have the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, we have received Light enough to know that *God (f) is a Spirit* and Life, and not bodily or material. So that they who go to Cloyſters or Religious Orders that they may follow Jeſus, are greatly deceived; becauſe there he is not at all followed, but oppoſed: For which they ought rather to be called the Cloyſters of Antichriſt than of Chriſt; becauſe the things wherein they contradict him are more than thoſe wherein they follow him.

I ask'd *If thoſe would not be ſaved who ſhould enter into a Religious ſtate with a good Intention, and being in it ſhould endeavour to live well according to their Language.*

She ſaid; Sir, theſe are all Impoſtors in the Sight of God: For they promiſe Poverty and they obſerve it not; becauſe they yet covet worldly Goods, and do all they can to pleaſe Men, that they may give them of their Goods. Theſe Vows oblige them not to deſire Riches, and they do their beſt to have them. If they cannot deſire them, much leſs can they poſſeſs or receive them. They vow Chaſtity alſo and very often they are content only by Force, and for want of Occaſions. God who *tries (g) the Reins*, ſees well if their Hearts and their Thoughts are chaſte, ſince ſo many things contrary thereto are heard of them. They vow Obedience, and they are full of ſelf-will. So far are they from obeying God, that they do not ſo much as hearken to him, and are ſubject only to their own Wills and Deſires, without any

(f) *John* 4. 24. (g) *Jer.* 17. 10.

other

other Submiſſion. By what means would you have theſe Perſons ſaved who falſifie their Faith to God ſince thoſe cannot be ſav'd who falſifie their Faith to Men? Some falſifie their Faith to God out of Malice and Hypocriſie, and others falſifie it out of Ignorance, being directed in their Faith more according to what others do perſuade them, than according to their real Practice. They make them believe that Poverty is obſerved when they poſſeſs nothing in particular, and in the mean time ſince the Kings and the great Men of the World do ordinarily profeſs nothing in particular having People and Officers under them who govern their Revenues: Even as theſe Votaries of Poverty have, who wou'd not by it be depriv'd of a Glaſs of Wine or any the leaſt thing. They are in this more happy than ſecular Perſons, who are oblig'd to care and labour for neceſſary things; whereas theſe *Monks* have all at their Wiſh without Pain or Labour; and if they be depriv'd of a Wife, they are free alſo of the Labours which Marriage brings along with it: So that their Chaſtity is more ſenſual than the being joyned with ſome Perſon of a froward or contrary Humour, which is more irkſome than Continence: So that theſe *Monks* who are called Penitents, do far leſs of Petence in their Monaſteries than they wou'd do if they were out of them: For their Vows of Obedience do conſtrain them only to what they have a Mind to do. They have no ſooner paſs'd their *Novitiate* but they are abſolute Lords, and taking the Will of their Superiours for that of God, they make them eaſily to condeſcend to theirs; elſe they wou'd become rebellious and chagrin or Diſturbers of others: And nevertheleſs they will think they have kept their three Vows, and believe that for this Cauſe they ſhall go to Paradiſe, tho' indeed all their Vertues be nothing but imaginay ones or Apiſh Tricks: And tho' they ſhou'd live well according to their Knowledge, yet they periſh; becauſe Ignorance does not excuſe Sin. To be ſaved, we muſt of Neceſſity have the *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth* of God; theſe for the moſt part have none of theſe Vertues: For that cannot be true Righteouſneſs, to quit their own Wealth to go afterwards and beg that of others, who very often have need of it themſelves, and yet dare not refuſe theſe whom they eſteem to be the Servants of God: neither is it juſt to live upon Alms, when the Body and Mind is ſound for Labour, neither is it juſt to leave their own Goods to their Kinſmen to enrich them, and they themſelves go live at the Charge of a Common-Wealth. For my part, Sir, I perceive in my interiour that all theſe things

things are Unrighteouſneſſes before God however they cover them with Perfections and Vertues: Neither do I ſee the *Goodneſs* of God reign in theſe Souls; becauſe its Property is to do good to all, and to do evil to none: But we ſee theſe Religious Perſons do good only to themſelves or thoſe who are aſſociated with them, ſtudying to do Miſchief to all thoſe who will not follow them. And as for the *Truth* of God, it is yet leſs obſerved by them than the two other Vertues: For all their Works are nothing but external, far from the real Truth of God, which appears always to be what it is, and theſe *Monks* make a ſhew of the Holineſs and Vertues which they do not poſſeſs, but are truly Hypocrites.

I ſaid to her; *That many of theſe* Monks *were Saints, and did Miracles.*

She ſaid; They became not Saints, Sir, by that manner of Life which is obſerved now in the Cloyſters. They muſt either have been Saints before they entered there, or being there, they muſt have reſigned themſelves to the Will of God, and followed the Holy Spirit; and if ſo, they might be holy in any Place, and in any State and Condition, and not in the Cloyſter only; but theſe *Monks* extol their Sanctity for their Honour and Profit, attributing it to the Perfection of their Rules, tho' theſe have often prov'd Hindrances to thoſe who were guided by the Holy Spirit, who is always without Conſtraint, whereas theſe Rules do fetter and bind Souls with ſo many Chains, that they are more chain'd than Slaves in the Galleys. This cannot but bring great Diſturbance to truly Chriſtian Souls, whom theſe Conſtraints do not render holy, but the Conformity of their Will to that of God; becauſe there can be no Holineſs but what is derived from him, and therefore no Saints, but according as they partake of his *Holineſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth*, from which Mens Practices are very remote; and if Men were not ſitting in greater Darkneſs than that of *Ægypt* of old was, they wou'd not reverence the *Monks* to day, becauſe there were Saints among them formerly: Since their Lives were wholly different from the Lives which the *Monks* lead now; and if they obſerve narrowly the Hiſtories which they themſelves write of them, they will find them a Reproof to them in every thing. For they write that thoſe *Holy Monks* did greatly deſpiſe the World, and theſe at preſent do love and ſeek it; that thoſe lov'd Poverty, whereas theſe love and ſeek for Riches: The firſt were humble and deſpiſed, and theſe are ſelf-conceited, and will be honour'd. Read, Sir, if you pleaſe, the Lives of all the *Holy Monks*, you will find them

them wholly contrary to what we ſee at preſent So that what ought to raiſe their Eſteem, confounds them.

I ſaid to her; *That Saints had inſtituted theſe Orders and Rules; and therefore they muſt be good.*

She ſaid; Sir, if theſe Orders and Rules had remained in the State in which their firſt Founders eſtabliſhed them, they might have been helpful for Sinners who wou'd reform their Vices; becauſe when Nature is left to its own Freedom, it contracts ſuch evil Habits, as that it cannot afterwards be delivered from them but by Rigour and Conſtraint. This is the Reaſon that mov'd thoſe firſt Founders to obſerve bodily Mortifications and Auſterities; becauſe the World was ſo addicted to all ſorts of Senſualities, that Men almoſt thought of nothing elſe but their bodily Eaſe and Pleaſures: To remedy which, theſe Lovers of Souls, introduc'd Ways of living that might reſiſt ſuch inveterate Vices, appointed Faſtings to (*h*) ſubdue the Body, Watchings (*i*) to attend upon Prayer, bodily Severities to reſiſt Luſt, and ſo of all the other Means that were proper to withdraw Men from the Vices to which they were habituated. All theſe things cannot be evil provided they be obſerved in the Spirit and Intention with which they were eſtabliſhed, becauſe they may ſerve as powerful Helps for Sinners who deſire to be converted; but every one has no need of theſe Means to be holy; becauſe they cannot give Holineſs, but ſerve only to correct the Vices that might make the Soul ſtill cleave to bodily Senſualities, and ſhou'd hinder the Reſignation they ſhou'd make of themſelves to be diſpos'd of by God. But to believe that theſe Auſterities can of themſelves render us holy, is a great Errour: For even the Devil might obſerve them, and continue a Devil ſtill: So alſo wicked Men may become Religious, and obſerve their Rules, and yet not change their Affection to their Vices: ſince the ſame Means which might deliver them from them, may plunge them farther into them, as we ſee by Experience that they will ſometimes ſtudy more Senſuality when they eat but Fiſh and Pulſe, than they wou'd do in eating Partridges and other good things, and will have more Vanity in wearing a courſe Habit, than in Silk and Purple: We may alſo meet with more Avarice in a poor Man than in one who abounds in Wealth: Therefore we can't judge the Vertue of the Soul by outward Exerciſes, ſince both a good and ill Uſe may be made of them.

(*h*) 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. (*i*) *Matth.* 26. 41.

I ſaid to her; *That Vows and the conſtraint Rules were Powerful Helps to regulate ones Life, and that the Cloyſters cut off many Occaſions of offending God, being out of the Hurry of the World.*

She ſaid; Truly, Sir, I cannot believe that that Conſtraint of Vows and Rules have been eſtabliſhed by the Holy Spirit: becauſe it is contrary to the Free-Will that God has ſo bountifully given us. The ſame Spirit cannot (*k*) give and take back the ſame thing. He ſhou'd be ſubject to the Paſſion of changing as we are, which cannot be in God. He cannot hold that to be evil which he has once approv'd as good. The greateſt Favour which ever he beſtowed on Man, is the having given him his Free-Will, which renders him a depending Deity, and capable of converſing with God as with his like; becauſe he is pleaſed to make a Creature of ſuch a Nature, that it ſhou'd have this Free-Will to all Eternity: And how is it poſſible that the ſame God ſhou'd change his eternal Deſigns, and ſhou'd inſpire the Saints to curb Men, and to deprive them of this ſame Liberty wherewith, when he created them, he wou'd endue them, to oblige them afterwards by Vows to follow or love him? If God had theſe Deſigns, no body ſhou'd be damn'd; becauſe the Goodneſs of God is ſo great, that it wou'd by force conſtrain all Men to be ſaved. No, no, Sir, this cannot be true: God can bind no body to Vows. This muſt be the Invention of Men, who having a good Will and Deſire that many ſhou'd be ſaved, thought it was good to conſtrain them by Vows and Ties, that they might be bound to continue in pious Exerciſes. This can come only from humane Prudence. and not from the Holy Spirit, tho' the Founders of Orders inſtituted it, or the Church after them found it expedient by Vows to oblige the Religious, that thereby they might be preſerved in their firſt Reſolution of ſerving God. This cannot at all proceed from the Holy Spirit, who will never act contrary to himſelf. And to know whether Vows and Conſtraints were powerful enough Means for the well ordering of Mens Lives that they might ceaſe to offend God, and live as true Chriſtians, we need only come to experience, which is ſtill the Miſtreſs of all Sciences. How many thouſand Perſons in *Chriſtendom* are now under Vows in Cloyſters and Religious Orders, and how

(*k*) *Rom.* 11. 29.

few

few of them are there who do Miracles? If theſe Vows and Rules came from the holy Spirit, they would certainly be all Saints: For the obſerving the Commands of the Holy Spirit, does ſtill produce Holineſs: ſo that all who wou'd be ſubject to the Vows which the Holy Spirit ſhou'd dictate to them, wou'd receive all the Fruits and Gifts, which are not to be found among the Votaries in Cloyſters: On the contrary, we ſee they are rather guilty of ſix Sins againſt the ſame Holy Spirit, which are ſo ordinary in theſe Votaries, that it may be ſaid, they are inſeparable from them: For we find in them always a Preſumption of being ſaved without good Works; becauſe being full of ſelf-love, they can never be good. They oppoſe alſo the known Truth, becauſe the real Truth reproves them: Therefore they will not hearken to it, chuſing rather to periſh in their Darkneſs, and to lay the Streſs of their Salvation upon the Opinion or Diſcourſe of Men. So that we need not enter into Monaſteries to diſcover clearly that they are not become Saints by their Vows and the Conſtraint of their Rules, nor yet have quitted all Commerce with Men, ſince we ſee they deſire as much their Converſation as ſecular Perſons do. And what will it ſerve for the Perfection of Souls, to have their Wills bound by Vows, and even their Bodies ſhut faſt up, when the Spirit is yet curious to know what paſſes in the World, as the Practice is in the encloſed Cloyſters? For if one would learn all ſort of News, he may go into one of their Parlours; and if our Will were bound to God when it is bound to the Will of Men, there wou'd not be ſuch Contradictions in the Cloyſters, where as many Perſons as there are, there are almoſt as many contrary Wills. All this does ſufficiently make appear that the Rules and Vows do not make the Perſon holy, or depending upon the Will of God: On the contrary, they rather eſtrange him from it: For as ſoon as they have fulfill'd their Obedience to their Superiour, they believe they have wholly ſatisfied God; whereas very often they offend him: for theſe Superiours are often eſtranged from the Spirit of God, neither is it to be accounted a great Vertue that we acquieſce in the Will of ſome Perſon whom we love. This is purely natural, and not from the Holy Spirit.

I ſaid to her; *That we have ſometimes heard that Miracles have been wrought by this Obedience to Men.*

She

She ſaid; Sir, theſe cannot have been true Miracles if they had their Riſe from Obedience to Men. There are ſo many things to be diſtinguiſhed in the matter of Miracles, that the Devil may eaſily work ſuch as the World wou'd admire: And I believe he has already deceived many pious Perſons by falſe Miracles: For he can dazle Mens Spirits, and make them take nothing for ſomething. He can alſo trouble the Humours of the Body and cauſe Diſeaſes, which he can afterwards remove; becauſe it is done by Charms, and by the ſame Charms it may be undone again: Beſides that, he has ſo many who are bound to him by preciſe Covenant, who do his Will, by whom he can work many Malefices which might ſeem real Miracles, tho' they be only all Tricks of the Devil. Therefore I will not believe that thoſe Stories which they tell us of Miracles fallen out by this Obedience to Men, are true, nevertheleſs I do not reject the Approbation that God has ſometimes given of the Submiſſion rendered to his Servants, who poſſeſs his Spirit, and ſpread it by teaching it to others, in obeying of whom, they obey God himſelf; becauſe they are not moved but by him: So that thoſe who obey them, do indirectly obey God. In this manner I believe that God may work true Miracles to confirm that it was his true Spirit which dwelt in theſe Superiours: As he wrought Miracles to confirm that the Apoſtles did poſſeſs his Spirit, becauſe he did not remain in the Fleſh to converſe with Men and teach them. He taught them by his Servants: Therefore he ſaid (*l*) *He that hears you, hears me*: But he ſays not this to all bodily Superiours, as it is now taken; becauſe it is to be feared, that many of theſe do directly follow the Devil's Will, and conſequently teach others to do the ſame, at leaſt indirectly. By which we may fear the Hazard there is in this Submiſſion to Men, and may learn alſo the Deceit there is in what they teach Chriſtians now, and particularly thoſe who wou'd ſerve God in Perfection.

I ſaid to her; *That the Vows were approved by the Church as a perfect thing, and that all the World did look on them as good things.*

(*l*) *Luke* 10. 16.

She ſaid; And for my part, Sir, I look upon them as evil things for all Perſons: For he who reſolves to be reſign'd to God with all his Heart, has no need to be conſtrain'd to this by Men; becauſe the Love he bears him, is ſtill ſtrong enough to tie him to God without needing that Men ſhou'd interpoſe in it; and he who has not this reſolute Will of reſigning himſelf to be governed by God, cannot make Vows in any Order, except in Hypocriſie: Becauſe Vows cannot conſtrain his Will, but his Body; and when the Body is conſtrain'd to do good againſt the Deſire of the Will, he is then the real Martyr of the Devil; becauſe he ſuffers much and merits nothing. And thus Vows cannot be good, neither for the Wicked nor yet for the Good, who, if they are ſo truly, have no need to be forc'd to do good by the Conſtraint of Men, if theſe Holy Founders have inſtituted Vows (which I do not believe) this muſt have been only out of humane Reſpect or Perſuaſion, or for want of divine Light; and if the Church approves them, it is to keep theſe Perſons in a preciſe Dependence upon her, from which, if theſe Vows were laid aſide, many would deliver themſelves; which is to be deſired, and it were far better that all theſe Perſons in Vows had their Liberty, than to continue cloyſter'd to the Damnation of their own Souls, and the deceiving of others, who look upon thoſe under Vows as Saints, ſubmitting to their Council and Government, tho' very often they are governed by the Devil, and he by their Means, gains the moſt Pious, who could not be gain'd any other way but by this Cover of Religion, which all the World eſteems to be good and holy. By this the Devil gets into the Throne of God, that he may deceive by falſe Appearances. If he had remain'd among the *Turks*, *Jews* or *Heathens*, he could not have become Antichriſt, ſeeing one cannot ſhock an Enemy at a diſtance, unleſs he approach him: So the Devil could not ſhock the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, if he had not inſinuated into the Church it ſelf, and among thoſe in it, who make a Profeſſion of Vertue, as the *Monks* and Religious Perſons: and he having ſlipt in among theſe, draws all the World after him, and yet they do not diſcover him, neither dare they believe that he dwells in theſe Perſons, who in Appearance and in the Eſteem of all the World, are holy; becauſe he has on his ſide the Great and the Learned.

I ſaid to her; *That they who had enter'd upon a vertuous Courſe of Life, went into the Cloyſters, that they might learn it better, and that by ſubmitting their Wills to Superiours, they might learn to ſubmit them to God.*

She ſaid; Sir, this School of Perfection is not good, for there they cannot learn true Vertue if it be not there. He who truly deſires to reſign himſelf to God, would do very ill to enter into Monaſteries now: For the Spirit of God is departed from them. The firſt Founders informed themſelves whether thoſe who wou'd enter into a Religious Life, were endued with, or aimed at the Love of God and Charity for their Neighbour: And theſe Inſtitutors at preſent ask how much Money they have to bring with them into the Monaſtery? And if they have Friends to give them Money after they are come there? This is a general Cuſtom. They muſt have one of theſe Qualifications, elſe there is no Entry into the Cloyſters: They muſt alſo have a good Body, a good Voice, and good Health, unleſs Money ſupply all the reſt, and for it they wou'd receive the Devil himſelf, if he came there with abundance of Money. How can Vertue be found there, ſince nothing but Money and Gain is there ſought for? So that a vertuous Soul who ſhould enter there, would be conſtrained to yield to the Prevalence of Vice, or elſe to go out again: For if ſuch a one thinks to learn Submiſſion to God by Submiſſion to ſome Superiour, he will be very far from it: Becauſe their Will is ſtill contrary to that of God, who does all things that are juſt, good and true; whereas theſe take Wealth unjuſtly againſt the Intention of their firſt Founders, who deſired to live in *Poverty*. They act alſo againſt the Goodneſs of God, when they will receive none but the Rich, or thoſe by whom they may reap Advantage; whereas Jeſus Chriſt receives every one, without Reſpect of Perſons. They act alſo againſt the Goodneſs of God, when they teach their Novices holy Geſtures and Countenances while the Heart is far from it, and they do not teach them any true *Piety*, but that only which has the Appearance of it, and is not true: So that the Novice cannot learn to ſubject himſelf to God by his Submiſſion to Men, who in all things are contrary to him. Therefore I am ſorry that a truly ſincere Perſon ſhould enter into a Monaſtery: For there he will find himſelf deceived, and will loſe the Vertue that he had before he came thither: For there God is not to be found any longer,

I ask'd her yet one more Queſtion upon this Head; that is, *Whether one who in Simplicity believes that the Monaſteries are yet governed by God, and goes thither with a Deſign to lead a better Life than in the World, and being there Endeavours to live well as to his own particular, without following the evil Maxims which he ſees are practiſed by others, would do Ill to go there, or to ſtay among them, having taken the Vows.*

She ſaid; Sir, this is a great Queſtion; but I will anſwer it, ſince I have promiſed to anſwer to what you ask. One who in Simplicity believes that God does yet govern the Cloyſters, would not ſin by entring into them; But if he diſcover the Reality of the Evil, he is obliged to depart from them, even tho' he were profeſt, provided it be in his Power: For before God his Vow is null; becauſe he is diſappointed of the Conditions for which he made it, which were to learn Perfection, and to be ruled according to God's Spirit. Theſe ſuppoſed Conditions being wanting, he by Conſequence may in Conſcience and before God break his Vow, but not before Men, who by the greater Force, will maintain their Authority: So that one who has taken his Vows going from them, tho' for a good end and his greater Perfection, ſhall by them be held for, and treated as an Apoſtate. In this Caſe he muſt conform himſelf to the Sufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, and endure Perſecution for Righteouſneſs. It were better therefore not to enter into them, fearing leſt he have not Strength enough to endure Perſecutions. But if he have been there for a long time, and cannot find the way to get out from them, he muſt reſolve upon a long Martyrdom: For they will not only hinder him to live well, as to his own particular, but they will oblige him by Force to follow the evil Maxims of others: For the Devil is of this Temper that he will never ſuffer Good where he can hinder it; and theſe Perſons being guided by the ſame Devil, will not ſuffer another to do good where they can hinder it. Hereby we ſee evidently that their Malice is not humane, but deviliſh. For humane Malice extends it ſelf only to Evil by its own Malice and Infirmity, or ceaſes to do good thro' Sloth or the Corruption of its own Will, which is never enclin'd to do Good. Nevertheleſs it eſteems and honours the good Deeds of others, tho' it be not enclin'd to follow or imitate them. This is the utmoſt that humane Malice extends to; but it never goes ſo far as to hinder another from doing good. How great ſoever this Sinner be, yet he willingly recommends himſelf to the Prayers of the Good:

But

But deviliſh Malice hinders all the Good it can, as theſe *Monks* do at preſent.

I ſaid to her; *I was much troubled to underſtand that there were ſuch Miſchiefs in the Cloyſters; becauſe ſome of my Friends were there, whom I eſteemed to be good Men, and deſirous to pleaſe God.*

She ſaid; Sir, If they are ſuch they muſt be perſecuted there, elſe I will not believe that they can be truly the Servants of Jeſus Chriſt, and yet remain in the Cloyſters without Perſecution. A truly good Man can no more abide in the Cloyſters than Water can abide in the Fire. There are many indeed who ſeem to be good Men, and have a good natural Temper to be at every body's Service, as *Hackney-Horſes* are. Theſe are not good Men tho' they ſeem to be ſuch; becauſe like a Reed they bow with every Wind. The Devil and wicked Men make uſe of ſuch Perſons to cover their great Wickedneſs; becauſe by ſome ſuch Simpletons, the World will judge that all are good and ſimple. But if your Friends be Men of Underſtanding, and of ſolid Vertue, they will eaſily perceive that all is corrupted in the Monaſteries, and if they love the Righteouſneſs of God, they cannot be ſilent, but will ſpeak againſt Iniquity in, doing of which they ſhall be oppreſs'd with Perſecution. If you ſpeak to them in particular, Sir, and if they truſt you with a true Relation of what paſſes among them, they will tell you yet more than I do: For I know not the Particulars of what paſſes in theſe Cloyſters, but only in general, that they are abominable before God; of which, their Behaviour in general is Evidence enough to thoſe of good Underſtanding, who will obſerve it that they may conceive it aright. The greateſt Evil is, that they cannot diſcover theſe Truths in any body; becauſe they are ſo powerful, and have ſuch Authority, that all the World dreads them; and thus the Evil being unknown, does Miſchief to many, and encreaſes daily, and there can be no Remedy applied to it: And he who ſhould attempt to do it, wou'd be cruſh'd under their powerful Arm: For they govern now all the Kings and great Men upon the Earth; as it is declared in the *Revelation*, that (m) *The Whore commits Adultery with the Kings of the Earth.*

(m) *Rev.* 17. 1.

I ask'd her, *If this Whore of the Revelation was the* Roman *Church?*

She ſaid; Yes, Sir, doubt not of it. It is of her only that S. *John* ſpeaks in his *Revelations*. Her Whoredoms will ſuddenly come to a Height. (*n*) You will very quickly ſee her overturn'd and render'd infamous before all the World. All thoſe who follow her ſhall be deſolate. For ſhe ſhall be ſo miſerably treated, that all the World will bewail her; and according as ſhe lifted up her ſelf in Glory and Magnificence, ſhe ſhall be as much debaſed and contemned. All her Courtiers, who at preſent extol and defend her, ſhall periſh with her, and ſhall ſwallow down as much of her Curſe, as they now drink of her delicious Wine. Yet a little while and ſhe ſhall have no longer Force to perſecute the Friends of God. Then we may preach the Truth thro' all the World, and every one ſhall receive it. What is now hid and cover'd with Silk and Purple, will then be diſcover'd to their Miſchief and Confuſion. Read, Sir, the Particularities of this Whore in the *Revelation*, you will find more than I tell you of them; for I ſee its Miſchiefs only in general, and they are ſo horrible to me that I tremble to think of them, and cannot, notwithſtanding, (*o*) pray that they may not come to paſs; becauſe this is what ſhe has merited by the ſtreight Righteouſneſs of God, which will never be truly known or followed but by the Ruine of her who has quitted her lawful Husband to joyn her ſelf with Fornicators; Such are all falſe Chriſtians with whom ſhe commits daily new Adulteries to the wronging of her faithful Husband, who has lov'd her ſo much, and enrich'd her with all ſort of Graces and Vertues, which ſhe abuſes, to give up her ſelf to her own Voluptuouſneſs and Pleaſures. Theſe if conſidered, will be found the Abyſs of Evils: For ſhe has no longer Fidelity nor Loyalty for her lawful Husband: She deſpiſes his Commandments and Laws: In ſhort, ſhe will depend only on her own Authority and Power, without reſerving it to him from whom ſhe received it, with all that ſhe has and poſſeſſes, which ſhe perverts ſo miſerably to the Prejudice of ſo many Souls, whom ſhe leads with her ſelf to Damnation.

I ask'd her, *How it was poſſible that a thing ſo holy, eſtabliſh'd by Jeſus Chriſt, could become ſo abominable?*

(*m*) *See Rev.* 17. *and* 18. (*n*) *Jer.* 14. 11.

She

She ſaid; Sir, the moſt perfect things become the moſt vile when they abuſe their Perfections. We ſee Examples of this, both in divine and humane things. The Angels who were ſuch excellent Heavenly Creatures, are they not become moſt infamous Devils? Men who were created by God, with all ſort of Perfection, ſurpaſſing all other Creatures, are they not become more miſerable in Nature than any other Animals, for having abuſed the Graces of God? Conſider a beautiful Woman that gives up her ſelf to Lewdneſs: Does ſhe not commit more Sins and Impieties than an ugly one wou'd do, tho' ſhe ſhou'd proſtitute her ſelf as well as the fair one? The more wealthy a Man is, the more he loſes when ruined; and one that ſtands very high, when he falls, hurts himſelf worſe than if the Fall had been only from his own Height; becauſe the greater Height we fall from, the Fall is the more grievous. Jeſus Chriſt had raiſed the *Roman* Church above all the People of God (*o*) that ever were in the World: For neither the Children of *Iſrael*, nor the People of the *Jews*, nor any others, did ever receive ſuch Graces and Prerogatives as the Church did that Jeſus Chriſt himſelf came to eſtabliſh upon Earth. He beſtowed on her, and adorned her with all ſorts of Gifts and Graces, promiſing her a perpetual Aſſiſtance and infinite Happineſs, ſending her the Holy Spirit to rule and govern her: But ſhe abuſing all his Favours, falſifies her Faith promiſed to her God; makes no reckoning of his Laws and Ordinances; but will follow her own Inſtitution. She abandons her ſelf to that which moſt pleaſes her *Senſualities*, and makes Alliance with the Kings of the Earth, and Creatures like her ſelf, having waſted with them all the ſpiritual Treaſures which ſhe had received from her only Husband: So that in her there is no Footſtep any longer to be ſeen of the Path in which ſhe trod, nor any of the Ways by which he walked, nor any Obſervance of the Precepts that he gave her. Inſtead of Poor, ſhe is become Rich, inſtead of Contempt ſhe is honour'd, and inſtead of renouncing the World, ſhe ſeeks it, follows and careſſes it: Are not theſe Heights of Infidelity great enough to make her be rejected and abandoned unto the Miſeries in which ſhe is plunged?

(*o*) *Rom.* 1. 8.

I ſaid to her; *That this Change of the Church from Poverty to Riches, and from Contempt to Honour, was introduc'd for a good End; and that the Councils had ſo ordain'd it for to ſupport her.*

She ſaid; Sir, theſe are all vain Amuſements, to believe that what Jeſus Chriſt found to be evil, the holy Spirit wou'd now find it to be good. We have not a mutable God (*p*) who changes his Reſolutions as Men do. He never chang'd and never will change. The Doctrine that Jeſus Chriſt brought upon Earth is the laſt Inſtruction that God will ſend Men for working out their Salvation. We muſt not look for any (*q*) other thing. Whatſoever is contrary to his Words, does certainly come from the Devil, who preſided in theſe Councils, who thus chang'd the Rules that Jeſus Chriſt gave his Church for maintaining her aright in his Spirit. But they would not perſevere therein but deviſed to find out Ways to maintain themſelves in the Name and Authority of the Church by worldly Riches and Honours. It had been much better for the Salvation of Souls, that the Church had periſh'd outwardly, when inwardly ſhe did ſo, than to invent new Ways contrary to Jeſus Chriſt to maintain her in Reputation. Even as it wou'd be much better not to have a Body, than to have one that is rotten: For that wou'd only infect others. I cannot expreſs to you, Sir, the Stench that I feel of the Corruption of the Body of this Church. How much more Stinking muſt it be in the Noſtrils of God? Wou'd it not be a great Sin to praiſe and commend a Whore that outwardly were beautiful, but Pocky within, and deſign that many might go into her to be infected with her Filthineſs? Such a one wou'd commit as many Murthers as there were Perſons killed by Familiarity with her. Are not you afraid, Sir, to do the ſame, when you will ſo much commend and excuſe this *Roman* Church, which you may eaſily perceive to be corrupted? And the more ſhe is dreſt up with Vertues and Sanctity, ſhe is the more capable of corrupting the Innocent, who approach her, thinking to find the Spouſe of Jeſus Chriſt without Blemiſh, while in the mean time they contract nothing but the Corruption of an infamous Strumpet. Thus the moſt Sound become diſeaſed, and will periſh if their Maladies be not quickly laid open, and dreſs'd, as is meet, by that divine

(*p*) *Jam.* 1. 17. (*q*) *Gal.* 1. 8, 9.

Phy-

Phyſician, who comes upon the Earth to teach us all things, according to the Promiſe that Jeſus Chriſt gave us ſpeaking to his Diciples, ſaying, (r) that he wou'd ſend the holy Spirit, who ſhou'd teach us all things. He is now come, Sir, hear him.

(r) *John* 16. 13.

The Fifteenth Conference.

That the Time is come when the Holy Spirit will teach us all Truth. How Chriſtians do reject his Light; and what Progreſs the Devil has made among them. For what end, how, and to whom God communicates his Spirit.

I Ask'd her, *Who this Phyſician might be, who could cure ſuch Sores and ſuch Corruption?*

She ſaid, It is the Holy Spirit, Sir, which Jeſus Chriſt did promiſe us a little before his Death, *who will teach us all things*. This is that *LIGHT* (a) which ſhall ariſe in the Darkneſs, which the World will (b) not receive, but (c) *Love their Darkneſs rather than the Light*. Therefore is it known by ſo few, becauſe they will not receive it; giving more Faith to their Darkneſs than to this Light which breaks forth as a new Day upon the Earth, and comes to diſcover the Truth of all things. But Men are become now (d) ſo much Lovers of themſelves that they will not learn the Truth, except in things (e) which are agreeable to them, reſiſting the Truth that reproves them, or is not conformable to their Liking and Inclinations. In this they will give Laws to the Holy Spirit, and make him ſpeak what they encline to hear. In theſe Times the Sins againſt

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(a) *Iſa.* 58. 10. (b) *John* 14. 17. (c) *John* 3. 19. (d) 2 *Tim.* 3, 2, *and* 8. (e) *Iſa.* 30. 10.

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the Holy Ghoſt are fully accompliſhed: Therefore Jeſus Chriſt calls them (*f*) dangerous times; becauſe the Sins which are committed then will not be forgiven neither in this World nor in the other. When Jeſus Chriſt came into the World, they committed many Sins againſt him: Nevertheleſs all thoſe ſhall be forgiven; becauſe the *Jews* never (*g*) underſtood that he was the Son of God: Nevertheleſs they have perceived and confeſſed that they did ill in putting him to Death, and all the Sins of which we repent, ſhall certainly be forgiven: But this Sin which is now committed againſt this Holy Spirit, will never be repented of; and therefore will never be pardoned, neither in this miſerable World, nor in that bleſſed one which is to come; becauſe they will never ask forgiveneſs for them, ſince they will not acknowledge them; and if they will not ſuffer the Phyſician to lay open and ſearch into the Sores of a Patient, how can they hope for a Remedy by his Cures? Even ſo the Holy Spirit cannot heal the Wounds of our Souls, if we will not let him diſcover them.

I ſaid to her; *It was very deſirable that theſe Wounds of our Souls were laid open, that they might be healed.*

She ſaid: Sir, it is indeed a deſirable thing, but it is very little deſired: For all the World reſiſts this Diſcovery, and they think they do a very pious Action, when they will hear nothing ſpoken of the Evils which have crept into the Church, nor yet of the *Monks* and others who profeſs to ſerve God. The Holy Spirit, it ſeems muſt accommodate himſelf to the Times if he would be heard, and muſt praiſe the Vices and Sins that are at preſent committed againſt him: For that String muſt not be touch'd to ſpeak evil of thoſe who deſire to continue in Reputation or Authority in the Church, even tho' they ſhould commit all ſort of Abominations, and tho' they were Sorcerers and Devils. They teach it as a Principle of Vertue that we ought to excuſe their Sins, and take our Garments to cover them, that no body may perceive them. This is very far from deſiring that theſe Wounds may be laid open that they may be healed. 'Tis no wonder, Sir, that I have ſo often told you, that I cannot ſee by what way there ſhould be ſo much as one Perſon at preſent ſaved in *Chriſtendom*; becauſe the greateſt Part live as *Atheiſts*, without acknowledging God any longer (*h*) or

(*f*) 2 *Tim.* 3. 1. (*g*) 1 *Cor.* 2. 8. (*h*) *Pſ.* 10. 4.

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thinking on him; and the reſt having the Reputation of good Men, are ſo full of the Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, that I know not what way they can be gained. If it ſhould be told a Prieſt, *Sir, you are deceived in the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments: They do not operate of themſelves, as you think*, he would think this Advertiſement came from the Devil, and would reſiſt it as a very ill thing: Or if it ſhould be ſaid to a *Monk*, or any other devout Perſon that they were not true Chriſtians, they would preſently take the Alarum and withſtand the Perſon who ſhould tell them this Truth, as if he were an Enemy of God, and a Liar: becauſe he who has no deſire to amend, will not be pleaſed to have his Faults diſcovered to him: Thus every one continues in his Sins, and deſires not to leave them off, or ſo much as diſcover them. In this Men love *Darkneſs rather than the Light*, which ariſes ſo graciouſly, upon which depends the Salvation or Damnation of all the Men in the World: For the Darkneſs is (*i*) univerſal and there is no Sect or Nation whatſoever that is in the real Truth.

I ſaid to her; *That ſhe was obliged to diſcover theſe Truths, that they would be of great uſe tho' it were but to my Soul.*

She ſaid; Sir, you are no more diſpoſed than any other to receive the Light of the Holy Spirit, unleſs your Heart be humble and your Spirit ſimplified. This is what Jeſus Chriſt told (*k*) *Nicodemus*, that he muſt become a Child, and enter again into his Mother's Womb; affirming elſewhere that (*l*) *If we are not converted, and become as little Children, we ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Theſe very Words muſt now have their compleat and perfect Senſe: For he who ſhall not ſubmit his Spirit in Simplicity as a little Child, cannot receive the real Truth which the Holy Spirit brings into the World; becauſe the Doctrines of Men and their evil Cuſtoms have ſo blinded and darkned their Underſtandings, that 'tis impoſſible for them to receive the Light of Truth, unleſs they be firſt ſtript of all their Sciences acquired by humane Means, which prove Vails and Bandages to the Eyes of the Soul: For theſe humane Maxims are all lying and deceitful, teaching to honour Men, and give Deference to them, when they are in Place and Dignities, not conſidering that Honour is due to God alone by

(*h*) *Iſa.* 60. 2. (*i*) *John* 3. 7. (*k*) *Matth.* 18. 3.

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his Commandment, and that Deference ought to be given to the Truth only, to which it is due; and as long as we don't apprehend theſe things, we will think we do well to adhere to the Sciences we have learned from Men, and will not empty our ſelves of them, that we may receive the Wiſdom of the Holy Spirit; eſpecially when by it we ſhall diſcover things quite contrary to our Sentiments, or thoſe which our Maſters taught us. You are not more than any other, Sir, delivered from your own Wiſdom, which hinders the Holy Spirit, and that even under a Colour of good: For you wou'd make Scruple to believe the Holy Spirit, when it ſhou'd tell you things contrary to the Councils held in the *Roman* Church, as I perceived when I ſpoke of ſuch things to you; becauſe you have been brought up in it, and foſter'd with a Belief that theſe Councils were directed by the Holy Spirit; tho' this cannot be true; it being your Reſolution not to depart from her. This will hinder you from ſubmitting to the Light of the Holy Spirit, which will have no Oppoſition nor Reſiſtance, but a ſimple Submiſſion.

I ſaid to her; *That I could not diſown I had Difficulty to believe things contrary to the Councils: Nevertheleſs I would follow the Light of the Holy Spirit.*

She ſaid; Sir, you cannot follow the one without quitting the other; becauſe indeed they are as far from one another, as Truth is from Lyes: For the Holy Spirit teaches only the Truth, which makes for the Glory of God; whereas theſe Councils teach only that which makes for their own Glory and Authority. Take off a little, Sir, this Veil of Preoccupation of believing blindly that *Rome* is the Holy Church; and ſubmit to God that he may ſhew you what Truth is in this. You will feel evidently in the Bottom of your Soul, that God cannot change as theſe Perſons have changed the Inſtitutions of Jeſus Chriſt. We muſt not be ſo void of Judgment, as blindly to lay the Foundation of our Eternal Salvation upon falſe Suppoſitions; but we muſt fully open our Eyes and conſider if what we have learned hitherto, be more clear and ſolid than what is now diſcovered. You will thereby perceive which of the two is fartheſt from the true Light: But as long as you are partial, and can hardly believe this or that, your Soul is not free to receive this Truth. If you believe things, becauſe Councils or others have told you them, you are not eſtabliſhed in the Truth of theſe things, but only in the Opinion you have of thoſe who tell you them. And do you not know

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that the Holy Spirit ſays (*l*) that *all Men are Lyars*? Wherefore then will you believe things becauſe Men ſay them? I wou'd never have you to believe my Words, becauſe I ſay them; but I wou'd indeed have you to believe them becauſe they are true. We ought always to follow and love the Truth, wherever it is; but never to believe and follow a Lye, even tho' it ſhou'd come from the Mouth of a holy Perſon: For otherwiſe we ſhall commit great and irreparable Faults as to the Salvation of our Souls, eſpecially in this dangerous time, wherein the Devil is plac'd (*m*) in God's Throne, and teaches us Lyes inſtead of the Truth. That God has given us an Underſtanding to comprehend, is not for temporal and tranſient things, but that we may underſtand and diſcern the Things that concern our Salvation and Eternal Life. In this we ought to employ all the Force of our Spirit (*n*) to diſcover if what they tell and teach us now in this Matter be true or not, without adventuring upon a blind Belief, as all Chriſtians do at preſent.

I ſaid to her; *That I would not lean to a blind Belief, but to the ſtreight Truth.*

She ſaid; Sir, if it be ſo, you will have no trouble to believe what I tell you, tho' it be contrary to the *Councils*: For I do not ſpeak of my ſelf, and I tell only what the Spirit of God dictates to me. Take good heed to my Words: they proceed always from the Spirit of Truth, who muſt teach all things. He cannot deceive you, as wou'd your Learning and Studies, that you may have acquired by humane Means Be jealous of them: For 'tis ſo long ſince the Devil did inſinuate himſelf into the Church of God to corrupt it, that almoſt it cannot be told from what time it was corrupted: Inſomuch that even while Jeſus Chriſt was yet upon Earth, the Dvil (*o*) liſted himſelf as a *Soldier* of Jeſus Chriſt, on deſign to thwart his Doctrine, and in the time of his Apoſtles he became a Captain; becauſe he had already gained many under his Power (*p*); and in the time of their Diſciples he had yet more, and might then by juſt Title have born the Name of *Colonel*; becauſe he *ruled many*; and after the Apoſtles Death he became a Governour by the Encreaſe of his Power: But ſince they wou'd needs form this *Body* of the *Roman* Church, the Devil is become *General*

(*l*) *Pſal.* 116. 11. (*m*) 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 4 (*n*) *Acts* 17. 11. (*o*) *John* 6. 10. (*p*) *Pſal.* 1, 16. 3. 13, 19.

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of it; by which Government, he has now conquered all the World, and is *univerſal Emperor*, eſpecially over the Chriſtians, whom he *holds* under his particular Empire. He is therefore juſtly called *Antichriſt*; becauſe he has gainſaid the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, which by him has been *aboliſhed* and *annihilated*; becauſe under this Pretext of Chriſt, he has infatuated Mens Minds to make them believe that what is contrary to Chriſt, is Chriſt himſelf, and that what (*q*) is the Synagogue of Satan, is the holy Church. And thus by theſe falſe Perſuaſions, he has deceived all the World, and the moſt Religions believe they follow God, when they follow the Devil: becauſe he is ſo maſqu'd with the Veil of Piety and Devotion, he cou'd have prevail'd with *well-meaning Perſons*, by teaching them Evil; but under this Colour *of Holineſs* and the *Holy Church*, all the World do blindly follow him with ſuch *Fidelity*, that it wou'd be very hard to divert them from him. Every one wou'd think he did ill to quit this Church, which is ſo only in Appearance, to follow the true one. I only regret you, and ſuch as you, Sir, who ſincerely intend to follow the real Truth, and nevertheleſs fear to reſiſt Lyes, out of a frivolous Imagination that the Church will ſtill continue in the material Place where Jeſus Chriſt eſtabliſhed it.

I ſaid to her; *That when I ſhould diſcover this Spirit of Errour, I would never follow it: That I would gladly abandon it, and follow the Spirit of Truth.*

She ſaid; Sir, if you wou'd follow the Spirit of Truth, quit then all theſe fooliſh Perſuaſions that Chriſtians have now, which are only invented by Antichriſt, that he may gain all the World to himſelf by apparent Holineſs. They wou'd perſuade you that *Rome* is the *Holy Church*, that you muſt obey her in all her Ordinances. If you do this, you ſhall be an *Idolater*, aſcribing to Men what belongs to God only; as *Honour*, *Power* and *Infallibility*. Every one believes that this belongs to her; tho' it belongs to none but God alone to be *Infallible*, and to uſe his Almighty Power: As alſo to receive Honour, appertains to God only: and he who ſeeks and deſires it, is a Robber, and receives what does not belong to him. Moreover, if you refer your ſelf in all things to the Church, ſhe will oblige you to things againſt God and your Conſcience, and make you to

(*q*) *Rev.* 2. 9.

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acknowledge that ſome Saints are Hereticks, as if ſhe knew of me, ſhe wou'd condemn me for ſuch, tho' I act only by the Holy Spirit, and all the Books that handle the pure Truth, are condemned and forbidden by this Church. There is no longer any thing but Lying that triumphs in her: For ſhe even teaches that we may have the Pardon of our Sins without a preciſe Love of God; which overturns all the Law and the Prophets: For they are eſtabliſhed, and have ſpoken for no other End (*r*) but to teach this Love which Man owes to God: And now there are Gloſſes and Arguments found out to diſguiſe this Love, and to give it the Mantle of ſelf-love, with which they promiſe us Salvation, that they may make us periſh inſenſibly, without knowing it: For all they who do not preciſely love God, (*s*) go to the Devil. Say the Church what it pleaſe, it cannot change the Ordinance that God made from the Beginning of the World. I ſee nothing there but Tricks and Diſtractions: For inſtead of ſaying to us what Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the Young Man in the Goſpel (*t*) *If thou wouldeſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, keep my Commandments*: For the obtaining of this Kingdom, ſhe teaches us a thouſand Fopperies which Jeſus Chriſt never taught us, by *Indulgencies*, *Confraternities*, *Cords*, *Girdles*, or *Scapularies*, and *Devotions* to *Images*. All this to me ſeems ſo far from the Spirit of Chriſtianity, that I am pain'd at the Heart when I think on't. I believe all theſe things ſerve only to dazle Mens Spirits, that they may never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and to amuſe us as they do the Children, with Rattles to charm our Miſeries.

I ſaid to her; *I would fain diſcover where the Holy Spirit was, that I might follow him.*

She ſaid; Sir, he is now come in the World. You ſhall know him by Truth, Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs: For he is the ſame with God. There are not in God three Perſons, as People imagine; becauſe all that we can ſay of God, is, only that he is perfect (*u*) Love, all-juſt, all-good and all-true. Behold, Sir, all that we can know of God in this preſent Life; and when we are told, that there are three Perſons in God, it is to be underſtood that there are three Powers, that Love is his Eſſence, that his (*x*) Word communicates

(*r*) *Pſ.* 115. 1. (*s*) *Matth.* 22. 40. (*t*) 1 *Cor.* 16. 22. (*u*) *Mat.* 19. 17. (*x*) 1 *Joh.* 4. 8.

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this Love, and that his (z) Underſtanding makes Man to comprehend it. This Love being the Eſſence of God, never beginning, and alſo will never end, which Love was communicated to Man from the Creation: But ſeeing he underſtood it not ſufficiently, God made his Word (a) *to become Fleſh*, that it might be the better underſtood by an Organ ſutable to our Senſes. Jeſus Chriſt therefore is no other thing but the Word (b) which (c) communicates to Man this Love that is in God; and the Holy Spirit (d) is the Wiſdom that gives the Underſtanding to comprehend this Love. Behold the three Perſons that muſt be known in God, theſe are, the *LOVE*, the *WORD* that declares this Love, and the *UNDERSTANDING*, that comprehends it. Now the Eſſence of Love, was from all Eterniry; But Men cou'd not know it but ſince the Creation, and even then imperfectly. Therefore the Goodneſs of God found out the Means to make it known by this humane Body which he took for this end (e) when he came to treat familiarly with Men; he becoming Man to make them ſee manifeſtly how much he lov'd them: And not being yet ſatisfied with this, to communicate this Love ſo ſenſibly, he (f) moreover ſends his Holy Spirit to teach them all things. You ſhall know him, Sir, by the principal Qualities of God, which are *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth*, which are always inſeparable from the Spirit of God. Remark well, if what is told you, be ſtill accompanied with theſe three Qualities.

I ask'd her, *If the Holy Spirit comes into the World in Fleſh, as Jeſus Chriſt did at his Birth?*

She ſaid; No, Sir, there is no need of his coming in the Fleſh, to communicate himſelf to Men as Jeſus Chriſt did; becauſe he comes not to ſhew them any new thing for working out their Salvation, Jeſus Chriſt, having ſufficiently taught them all things, tho' Men have not comprehended it; and now the Holy Spirit comes to give unto the Mind the Underſtanding of the ſame things which Jeſus Chriſt taught while he was on Earth. Even as Jeſus Chriſt came not to deſtroy the Law of God, but (g) to perfect it, ſo the Holy Spirit comes not now to deſtroy the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, but to (h) perfect

(z) 1 *Cor.* 2. 12. (a) 1 *Joh.* 5. 20. (b) *Joh.* 1. 14. 16. (c) *Rev.* 19. 13. (d) 1 *Joh.* 4. 9. (e) *Eph.* 1. 17. (f) *Joh.* 3. 19. (g) *Joh.* 16. 13. (g) *Eph.* 5. 9. (h) *Matth.* 5. 17.

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it, and to give the perfect Underſtanding of it to all thoſe who will receive it. 'Tis not Needful that for this end he take a Humane Body; becauſe he brings no new Words but new Notices, that may be conceived by Mens Spirits. Theſe Notices being ſpiritual have no need of a natural Body that they may be communicated to the Spirits of Men. If you wou'd receive him, Sir, you muſt become a Child, and *(i)* ſubmit your ſelf wholly to God, and then you will find the Effects. But never let your ſelf be deceived by falſe Appearances: For there are now many falſe Prophets that come in God's Name, and are of the Synagogue of Satan, as I told you formerly. Try always if they who ſpeak to you do poſſeſs theſe three Qualities of God: Thereby you ſhall aſſuredly diſcover them. For if you let your ſelf be amuſed with good Words, or even by the Gifts of Propheſies or Miracles, the Devil can counterfeit enough to deceive you. Reject alſo all thoſe who praiſe or flatter you: Becauſe the Devil does ordinarily uſe theſe Means to deceive thoſe whom he deſires to gain to himſelf. The Spirit of God is always firm and true, full of Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs. There is no need that he make himſelf viſible to the Eyes of the Fleſh, he ſhall be ſufficiently felt by the Sentiments of the Soul, and the Eyes of the Spirit. He ſhall illuminate all Fleſh, and enlighten the Spirits of all thoſe who will hear and follow him. But there muſt be an humble Heart, and a Spirit entirely yielded up to God.

(i) Gal. 4. 6.

The Sixteenth Conference.

How we muſt beware of falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, which ſeduce all the World, and are ſo much followed at preſent. How to diſcern true Prophets from the falſe; and that it would be to no purpoſe at preſent to aim at the Converſion of Chriſtians by preaching the Truth to them.

I Ask'd her, *How it was poſſible to beware of theſe falſe Prophets, ſince there were ſo many of them, and that they were diſguiſed with Vertue and Holineſs.*

She ſaid; Be upon your Guard, Sir; For it is in this Age that we (*a*) *ought to be ſober, and watch continually; becauſe the Devil goes about us on deſign to devour and deſtroy us.* If we have not Faith to believe all that Jeſus Chriſt has foretold us, we could not reſiſt him; becauſe he is ſo diſguiſed with Sanctity, and cover'd with Hypocriſie, that the moſt Pious will blindly believe and follow him. Reſiſt him ſtrongly, Sir, becauſe of the warning that Jeſus Chriſt ſo often gave us, (*b*) *to beware of falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, that they will ſeduce and deceive many.* It is not as to *Turks*, *Heathens* or *Hereticks*, that Jeſus Chriſt bids us *be ſo much upon our Guard*, but falſe Chriſtians who ſit in the Throne of God. He who has not Faith to believe that this is the time now wherein (*c*) *the Abomination of Deſolation is in the Sanctuary* cannot reſiſt the Devil, becauſe he reſiſts the known Truth, and ſo commits a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: For this *Abomination* is ſo true and manifeſt that no body can be ignorant of it, but they who are obſtinate in Sin, and will die without Penitence, blindly preſuming of their Salvation, without deſiring to diſcover the Truth which is now ſet before their Eyes. The Holy Spirit who is now come to bring

(*a*) 1 *Pet.* 5. 8. (*b*) *Matth.* 7. 15. (*c*) *Matth.* 24. 15.

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into the World the Light of Truth, clearly diſcovers all things, and ſhall make manifeſt the Lyes and Defects of thoſe who are believed to be the Church, if the People will only give ear to the Truth, and not continue obſtinately in the Perſuaſions which they blindly received: For ſuch ſhall be deſtroyed (*d*) with *Sorcerers*; not that they ſhall commit the ſame Sins with thoſe *Sorcerers*, which poiſon others, but becauſe of their Unbelief, they ſhall perſiſt to believe and follow theſe falſe Prophets, who ſhall lead them into the Depth of their own Miſeries, and this by the juſt Judgment of God; becauſe they *loved* (*e*) *the Darkneſs more than the Truth*, which God ſends ſo liberally for enlightning the World; and thoſe who will not receive it, reſiſt the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot be forgiven neither in this World nor in the other; and conſequently they ſhall be obliged to continue with the *Sorcerers*, whom they wou'd not leave in this Life, reckoning themſelves to be more holy than the Holy Spirit: For they wou'd not believe the Truth of the Evil hid under a Colour of Vertue and Sanctity, and reſiſted the Truth as an evil thing.

I ask'd her, *How I might avoid theſe falſe Bretheren, with whom I muſt daily converſe? and if I ought to have an ill Opinion of all?*

She ſaid; Sir, truſt no body, unleſs you ſee clearly that the *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs* and *Truth* of God lives in them; or at leaſt, that in the whole Courſe of their Actions they ſtrive to attain to theſe three Vertues: For otherwiſe you will be eaſily deceived; becauſe you are of eaſie Belief. You ſhall think you treat with a Servant of God, when you ſhall be treating with a *Sorcerer*. There are ſo many of them thro' all the World that they make up more than three parts of it, and the moſt Wicked have the Appearance of Vertue and Holineſs; and by this Hypocriſie they deceive good Men who wou'd ſcruple to have an ill Opinion of their Neighbour. You muſt not be of the Opinion that all your Friends are *Sorcerers*, thereby to hate and condemn them; but you muſt diſtruſt every one that you may not be deceiv'd by them; not to mock them thro' Malice, but to beware of them (*f*) thro' Prudence, till you know aſſuredly that they ſtrive for theſe three Vertues of God; becauſe the Devil can never poſſeſs them, but in Appearance, and 'tis eaſie to diſco-

(*d*) *Rev.* 21. 8. (*e*) 2 *Theſ.* 2. 10. (*f*) *Matth.* 10. 16, 17.

ver when they are falſe: For the Qualities of the Devil, are *Lying*, *Inconſtancy*, *Hypocriſie*; and thoſe who are of the Devil, deal uſually in *Lyes*, and are inconſtant and changeable, diſguiſed and diſſembled, (g) *hating the Light, fearing leſt their Works ſhou'd be known and made manifeſt.* He who is of the Devil, is always haughty and proud, and affects Honour, and will not willingly yield to any body. On the contrary, he who is of God, or ſeeks him, has ordinarily theſe Qualities; he is true, ſincere and ſingle in Heart, and endeavours to conform him ſelf to the Life and Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, and neither ſeeks, nor fears, nor hopes for any thing without him. All theſe Marks, Sir, will make you eaſily diſcern with what Spirit thoſe are led with whom you muſt converſe, that you may not let your ſelf be adviſed by any erroneous Spirits, who are now ſo numerous, and in the higheſt Places and Dignities: Becauſe the Devil being ſo powerful, he ſtill prefers his own to Honours and Offices, that by theſe Means he may gain the more Followers. Therefore I adviſed you heretofore to abandon all, that you may not continue in ſo great Perils as there are now in converſing with Men.

I ſaid to her; *That I had a long time agoe quitted the Converſation of worldly and evil Men; but as for thoſe who ſeem'd to me to be good Men, I had never a hard Thought of them, and I could hardly believe that they belonged to the Devil.*

She ſaid; If none but Worldlings and wicked Men cou'd deceive us, Jeſus Chriſt wou'd not have ſo often ſaid, (h) *Beware of thoſe who come to you in my Name and deceive many, yea, even if it were poſſible the very Elect.* Theſe Words make appear ſufficiently that it is not Worldlings and wicked Men, of whom Jeſus Chriſt ſays ſo often, *Be not deceived*; becauſe all good Men do abhor theſe Worldlings and wicked Men: They are therefore out of Hazard of being deceived by them. But theſe devout Perſons, or who wear Religious Habits, being nevertheleſs in the Devil's Service, may deceive many under theſe falſe Appearances. It is with juſt Reaſon that Jeſus Chriſt calls our Times *dangerous*, wherein the Dangers are ſo cover'd and diſguis'd with great Advantages, that the one can ſcarcely be diſcerned from the other. We will eſteem it a great Happineſs to have ſome Friend a Prieſt

(g) *John* 3. 20. (h) *Matth.* 24. 4, 5, 11, 24.

or

or a Religious Perſon, or plac'd in ſome Dignity, who being a Man of Honour and Learning, will give us his Advice and Counſel, both as to our ſpiritual and temporal Good: Nevertheleſs this Perſon ſhall ſometimes be engaged to the Devil to do all the Miſchief he can. Is not this a very dangerous thing? For we take their Counſel as if it came from God himſelf; and it comes directly from the Devil, who makes us follow his Will under the Pretence of its being the Will of God. Was it not needful, Sir, that Jeſus Chriſt ſhou'd ſo often and ſo preciſely warn us *to take heed of theſe Dangers*, to which no Perils, neither from the Wicked nor from viſible Devils, are to be compar'd? becauſe all good Men will always reſiſt them: But theſe falſe Bretheren who come in Chriſt's Name, wou'd deceive the very Elect, Therefore, Sir, truſt no body, tho' they ſhou'd ſay, *I am Chriſt:* For Chriſt is not here and there, but only in the Doctrine (*i*) that he left us by his Word. He who believes any other thing, is deceived.

I ſaid to her; *That if this were true, many Souls would be deceived; becauſe all they who profeſs to ſerve God, do follow the Counſel and Direction of ſome Man; and if he be of thoſe who belong to the Devil, they may deliver many Souls to Satan.*

She ſaid; Sir, this is lamentable in our Days, wherein they have introduc'd theſe Directions of Men, by which ſo many are led to Damnation, even tho they were not directed by ſome Sorcerer, they are at leaſt turned away from God to adhere to Men. This is a great Hindrance to Vertue, and the Salvation of Souls: For as long as we adhere to the Creatures (*k*) we ſhall never find God. The one muſt go out before the other enter; and theſe Guides inſtead of leading Souls to God do withdraw them from him, even tho' they were good Men; becauſe God is jealous, and will not ſuffer a Rival, nor our Hearts to be ſeparated or divided. If ſo many Souls be engag'd to the Devil by theſe Directions, it is becauſe they choſe rather to be lov'd by Men than God. This gives the Devil Power to gain them by the Means of theſe Directors, who are much more lov'd and follow'd than God is: For he is often forgotten, that they may remember theſe Men. Wives eſteem them more than their Husbands; Daughters more than Fa-

(*i*) *John* 14. 21, 23. (*k*) *Cant.* 3. 2, 4.

ther and Mother, and Men take more of their Counſel than that of Jeſus Chriſt: Thus every one furniſhes Matter for the Devil to be deceiv'd by him. It is by this Door he enters to make himſelf univerſal Emperour of the whole World. He had gain'd many before the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt; but ſince he ſlipt into the Church by theſe Directions, he poſſeſſes all, the Wicked with their own Will, and the Good indirectly by the Conduct of his Adherents, whom he has introduc'd into the Church: For Jeſus Chriſt did never eſtabliſh ſuch Directions in his Church, nor yet his Apoſtles, nor their Diſciples. If this had been an Inſtitution of the Holy Spirit, it would have been obſerv'd by the Primitive Chriſtians, who had more Zeal to gain Souls to God than theſe new Directors have: For they rather draw them to themſelves than lead them to God. This often makes the Guides and thoſe who are led by them to periſh and go both together to the Devil.

I ask'd her, *By what Means I might avoid the Seduction of theſe falſe Prophets, ſince they had the chief Ranks in the Church? how I might diſcover them from the true ones? If the one be Prieſts and Religious Perſons as well as the other?*

She ſaid; It will be very hard for to diſcern them, unleſs you read diligently the ancient Prophets, : There you will find how the true and how the falſe Prophets have ſpoken: For both the one and the other are this Day guided by the ſame Spirits. The holy Prophets were and ſtill will be led (*l*) by the Holy Spirit; and the falſe ones were and ſtill will be led and directed by the Devil (*m*), as well at preſent as under the old Law. There is only this difference of times, that then there were many holy Prophets, and now there are few or none; becauſe the Number of the Falſe is ſo encreaſt that they have almoſt ſwallowed up the Good. And as God is not viſible by the Eyes of the Body, neither is the Devil viſible after that Manner, both being inviſible Spirits; who nevertheleſs render themſelves viſible by their (*n*) Operations: For he who is guided by God, will ſtill ſpeak (*o*) the Truth without regarding whether it pleaſe or diſpleaſe Men: On the contrary, he who is led by the Devil, will ſtill ſpeak (*p*) as Men are willing to hear.

(*l*) 2 *Pet.* 1. 21. (*m*) 1 *Kings* 22. 21, 22. (*n*) *Gal.* 5. 19, 22. 2 *Cor.* 6. 7. 13. 8. (*p*) 1 *John* 4. 5, 6. 2 *Tim.* 4. 3.

Re-

Remark well, Sir, in the holy Scripture ; you will find (*q*) that all the falſe Prophets did then always tell good News, and promiſed to every one Peace, Proſperity and Aſſurance whereby they deceived all the World. This is even practiſed at preſent : For if you take notice of all theſe Prieſts and Religious Perſons, you ſhall hear them always promiſing Peace and Safety to every one, and that even in temporal Affairs, whether as to the State or as to particular Perſons : You hear them always telling good News, and promiſing that all ſhall go well : So that if you remark the Diſcourſes of theſe falſe Prophets of the old Law, and the Preachers and Confeſſors at preſent, you ſhall hear them all ſpeak almoſt the ſame Language : For the moſt Pious now-a-days ſtudy to pleaſe Men, and to tell them things agreeable to their Senſes, and hereby they deſtroy all the World : For if they were in the Spirit of God, they wou'd tell the Truth, and wou'd preach to all the World (*r*) *that the Abomination is in the Sanctuary, and that it is high time to turn to God. That* (*s*) *the Ax is laid to the Root, to hew down the Tree, and to break down* (*t*) *that great Statue of the Church which Sin has rendered abominable in the ſight of God ; and alſo that the Life of Chriſtians is very far from true Chriſtianity ; and that the beſt of them live in a Preſumption of their Salvation, and in other Sins againſt the Holy Ghoſt.* Which is moſt true : But inſtead of doing this, they praiſe and exalt the Church as if ſhe were holy ; and they perſuade People that they are Chriſtians when they are baptized ; and tho' they do not at all live according to the Rules of true Chriſtianity, that yet nevertheleſs they ſhall be ſaved. In which they deceive and ſeduce them : For there are no true Chriſtians, but they (*u*) who obſerve the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, and no body can be ſaved, but (*x*) he who keeps the Commandments of God, the firſt of which, is, *to love God with all our Heart, and our Neighbour as our ſelves*, which no body does : Nevertheleſs all theſe falſe Prophets tell the People that they ſhall aſſuredly be ſaved, and that all ſhall go well with them. Is not this a ſure Mark to diſcern falſe Prophets from the true ? becauſe the Falſe flatter us always for our Ruin, and the True reprove us for our Salvation. He that wou'd deliver him-

(*q*) 1 *Kings* 22. 12, 13. *Jer.* 6. 14. 23. 17, &c. (*r*) *Matth.* 24. 15. (*s*) *Matth.* 3. 10. (*t*) *Dan.* 2. (*u*) 2 *John* 9. (*x*) *Matth.* 7. 21. 19. 17.

ſelf from being deceived, muſt diligently examine whether theſe Church-men ſpeak to us according as they are willing to hear, or if they truly reprove what is blame-worthy, of which ſort we ſhall find ſo very few, that almoſt none will ſpeak the Truth when it is diſpleaſing to People, eſpecially to thoſe who are in Places and Dignities. For this cauſe our Times are juſtly called *perilous Times* (*y*), ſince the Evil is ſo maſqu'd with Vertue: For if the Evil were manifeſt, there wou'd be no danger; becauſe all good Men wou'd avoid it, and ſo wou'd put themſelves out of Hazard of being deceived: whereas when it is covered over with Piety and Vertue, they think ſometimes they wou'd do evil if they ſhou'd look on it as evil. Therefore Jeſus Chriſt has great Reaſon to ſay to us ſo often, *Beware of falſe Prophets that come in my Name, and be not deceived by them*; and alſo to tell us (*z*) *that we muſt get out of* Judæa; that is, out of the Church, *when we ſhall ſee the Abomination of Deſolation.* For this Cauſe I think, Sir, it is now time to flee.

I ask'd her, *If it would not be better to abide in the Church, and endeavour to make others like my ſelf ſee the Deceit and Dangers in which they live, than by flying out of her to abandon them to theſe Perils?*

She ſaid; If you could illuminate them and make them ſee the Truth without deſtroying your ſelf, it would be better to remain in her, tho' it ſhou'd coſt your Life; but there is no Appearance of prevailing with any, becauſe they are ſo obſtinate in their Sins, which they will not know: For if you ſhou'd tell any benefic'd Perſon in the Church that he is not a true Chriſtian, and that the Church has fallen away and become more *Phariſaical* than ever the true *Phariſees* were, they wou'd not believe you, but perſecute you; and your beſt Friends, the moſt Pious of them wou'd believe you were become an Heretick, and that you wou'd alſo pervert them: Becauſe the Darkneſs is ſo great that they take Lies for Truth without perceiving it; and they ſhou'd eſteem that to be evil which were moſt good. Therefore you wou'd do others no good, and you wou'd do evil to your ſelf, and draw upon your ſelf many Perſecutions, and bring your ſelf in hazard of falling from the ſtreight Truth thro' an Infatuation of Spirit, with which the Devil directs every one, and hinders them from knowing or diſcovering the Truth. Therefore Jeſus

(*y*) 2 *Tim* 4. 1. (*z*) *Matth.* 24. 16.

Chriſt

Chriſt ſaid very well, (*a*) that we ought not to give Roſes to Swine nor Childrens Bread to Dogs (*b*) : The Swine are Perſons who wou'd make a Dunghil of the moſt fragrant Vertues ; and Dogs are they who wou'd tear the Truth by Reproaches and Calumnies. It wou'd not therefore be adviſeable at this time to remain in the Church, when Jeſus Chriſt adviſed *to depart and flee out of her* : For there you ſhall not find Children who will receive the Word of God, which is the Bread of our Soul, but Maſters and Miſtreſſes who believe they are more wiſe and more juſt than the Holy Spirit.

I ſaid to her ; *That it ſeemed to me, we were wanting in Charity, when we minded only our own Salvation, and that it was grievous alſo to follow God, without any other Company.*

She ſaid ; Sir, you will not act againſt Charity, by withdrawing from Chriſtians now ; becauſe they are obſtinate in their Courſes to which they are habituated, and in which they will die without Repentance, and therefore it will avail nothing to preach to them : And the Holy Spirit tells us ſomewhere (*c*) *that we muſt leave off to point out and ſpeak that which does not profit ; and that the God of Peace will very ſhortly* (*d*) *bruiſe Satan under our Feet.* I underſtand hereby that it is no longer ſeaſonable to repreſent the Truth to Chriſtians now, becauſe they will reſiſt and quarrel the Truth, even when we wou'd make it known to them. It is to them we ought not to point out the Finger, nor to ſpeak ; becauſe no Words, how true ſoever, will profit them any thing. Yet for all this, you ſhall not remain all alone in following God ; but (*e*) a great many will follow him with you ; but you muſt go among the *Jews*, where many will be converted and receive the Truth, and will flee from the Spirit of Errour, in which they have been detained for ſo long a time ; For of God's People they became his Enemies : For this cauſe they were ſcattered and divided : But by this Coming of the Holy Spirit (*f*) they ſhall recover the Light and (*g*) ſhall re-enter into the Sheep-fold of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſhall be (*h*) *his People*, and the Members of his true Church.

(*a*) *Matth.* 7. 6. (*b*) *Matth.* 15. 26. (*c*) *Iſa.* 58. 9, 14. (*d*) *Rom.* 16. 20. (*e*) *Rev.* 7. 4,—9. 14. 1,—15. (*f*) *Iſa.* 44. 3. 59. 20, 21. (*g*) *Iſa.* 40. 11. *Ezek.* 34. 12,—31. (*h*) *Hoſ.* 1. 10. 2. 23.

And

And becauſe theſe are only guilty of the Sin againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall (*i*) be forgiven them; whereas thoſe Chriſtians will ſin now againſt the Holy Ghoſt: Therefore they ſhall not be forgiven in this World nor in the other. You need not then amuſe your ſelf any more about this Matter; I have made Trials enough, having accoſted the Perſons moſt renowned for Vertue among the Chriſtians, and I found not ſo much as one of them capable of receiving the Truth; they are ſo pre-occupied with their *Roman* Church, their Maxims, and ſeeming Vertues, that it may be ſaid of them *that as Jannes and Jambres reſiſted the Truth, even ſo Chriſtians do reſiſt* it in the ſame manner. You are the firſt who has heard me tell the Truth: For till now I cou'd not explain it to any body. This did often trouble me and made me alſo reſolve to quit the Converſation of all Men, and travel ſo long till I ſhou'd find ſome one to whom I might declare the Truth; Becauſe *FOR THIS I AM BORN.*

I ſaid to her; *That therefore ſhe was obliged to declare the Truth to many, ſince ſhe was born for this end, and ſhe knew thoſe who were capable to receive it.*

She ſaid; Sir, it is not my Buſineſs to enquire for Men; becauſe my Life conſiſts in my Recollection, from whence the Converſation of Men would withdraw me: For I know by Experience that all Creatures are a Hindrance to me, and loſs of time. I love rather to remain alone: But if you will tranſmit to others the Truth which I have communicated to you, you are free to do it, or rather obliged to it: Becauſe God having permitted you to rencounter me, and given me time and Place to tell you ſo many diverſe things, I ſhall believe he will require of you that you impart them to others: But you muſt conſider well to whom; becauſe every one is not capable of ſo great things, and if you addreſs to ſome that are in Covenant with the Devil, of which there are ſo many at preſent, they will uſe you hardly, and conſult with all theſe Followers of Satan, to oppoſe and to ſtifle theſe Truths in their Cradle. Therefore in this you muſt (*k*) *uſe the Wiſdom of the Serpent, and beware of Men; For they will deliver you up to Governours, and will perſecute you, or kill you becauſe of the Truth*, which is God. (*l*) This bad

(*i*) *Matth.* 12. 32. (*k*) *Matth.* 10, 16, 17, 18. (*l*) *Rev.* 12. 17.

Uſage

Uſage foretold by Jeſus Chriſt will in this Age have its full Accompliſhment: This in the Beginning of the Church of Jeſus Chriſt was but fulfilled in part, becauſe the Apoſtles only and ſome few others ſuffered for the Truth; but at preſent many ſhall be put to death for this Truth, (m) *The Father ſhall riſe up againſt the Son and he againſt the Father; and they ſhall deliver up one another to the Rulers to be put to Death; becauſe* (n) *the Hour is come, and the Power of Darkneſs,* which has ſo ſeiz'd upon all the Earth; (o) that they who ſhall kill you for the Truth, ſhall think (p) they do God Service: For Satan's Power is ſo great and univerſal, that it has almoſt blinded all Men; and their Spirits being infatuated, they take that which is falſe, to be real, and eſteem Lyes more than the Truth: And all this is ſo well maſqu'd with Vertue and Sanctity, that even the beſt Men will think they do offer Sacrifice to God, when they kill you. Therefore take heed always, Sir, *that you give not the Children's Bread to Dogs, nor caſt Pearl before Swine*; but try well before you ſpeak to any, if he *hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, or ſome other of the eight Beatitudes, which are the Marks that Jeſus Chriſt gave, whereby to diſcover thoſe who ſhall be bleſs'd and ſhall receive the Spirit of Truth: But as ſoon as you ſhall meet with Oppoſition to the Truth, leave off to tell it, and never move in that which will avail nothing: For God has promiſed *that he will ſhortly bruiſe Satan under your Feet.* Yet a little while the Devil has his Empire, (q) which encreaſes greatly; and ſo ſoon as it ſhall be at an end, *God will bruiſe him under the Feet of his faithful Servants*, who ſhall (r) triumph over all the Powers of Hell: But they muſt yet ſuffer a little, and (s) continue faithful unto death.

(m) *Mark* 13. 12. (n) *Luke* 22. 53. (o) *Iſa.* 60. 2. (p) *John* 16. 2. (q) *Rev.* 12. 12. (r) *Luke* 10. 19. (s) *Rev.* 2. 10.

The

The Seventeenth Conference.

That the Jews *and* Heathens *are better diſpoſed to be converted unto God than the* Chriſtians; *and that the* Jews *ſhall be reſtored, and the* Chriſtians *rejected.*

I Ask'd her, *If I would run the Riſque of theſe Dangers by going among the* Jews, *ſince according to her ſaying, they were more diſpoſed to receive the Truth?*

She ſaid; Yes, Sir, there is Hazard there as well as elſewhere; becauſe the Devil has thoſe who are in Covenant with him, in every Place, in every State, in every Sect, and under every Law: For he has run to and fro thro' all the Earth, and hath devoured many, as well among the *Jews* as among others: But I except the Good among the *Jews*, and I know certainly that theſe are more diſpoſed to receive the Truth than any others; becauſe they ſin thro' Ignorance: For they never knew that Jeſus Chriſt was the Son of God, and do not yet know it: For they look for this Son of God in Glory, and know not that he ſhall be the ſame who came already among them in Diſhonour. As ſoon as they ſhall diſcover this Truth (*a*), they ſhall return from their Exile, and re-enter into the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, and ſhall return to be God's People, in Excluſion of the Chriſtians, who having abuſed ſo many Privileges (*c*) ſhall be cut off, and the *Jews* ſettled again on their Ruins.

I ask'd her, *Wherefore the Chriſtians could not be reformed, that they might become the People of God as well as the* Jews *Converted, to take away their Crown?*

She ſaid; Sir the *Jews* are much more diſpoſed to receive the Truth, than the Chriſtians are: For theſe ſin out of pure Malice, and have forſaken God and his Laws. This

(*a*) *Matth.* 23. 38, 39. (*b*) *Rom.* 11. 25, — 31. (*c*) *Rom.* 11 21, 22, 23.

the

the *Jews* have not done, They do yet fear and know God, and the Chriſtians do neither: For they preach publickly that to obtain the Pardon of our Sins, we are not obliged to love God; that to ſave us from going to Hell it is enough to have ſelf-love; that this Fear of their Damnation is capable of procuring them the Pardon of their Sins and Salvation; and they utter a thouſand other Blaſphemies againſt God in every thing. This they can't do thro' Ignorance; becauſe beſides the Law of God which they have received as well as the *Jews*: They have moreover the Law of the Goſpel and the Doctrine of the Apoſtles, which was left them in Writing for an everlaſting Memorial, which all Chriſtians ought ſtill to follow. The Chriſtians have received Faith to believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, and that he came into the World, where he ſuffered Pains, Labours, Poverty and Contempt, was perſecuted, impriſoned, ſcourged, buffetted, and at laſt put to Death on a Croſs, as a Malefactor, and all this to give an Example (*d*) to Chriſtians, that by following his Steps, they might enter into his Glory. They do believe all theſe things, and alſo that the ſame Son of God is really in the Sacrament of the Altar, with a great many other things contain'd in the *Creed*. Nevertheleſs, againſt their Belief they live directly contrary to what Jeſus Chriſt taught them, and what they believe by the Command of God. If the *Jews* believed this, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, they would mourn for the Sins which they committed againſt him, and would follow his Example, (which (*e*) ſhall very ſhortly come to paſs:) whereas the Chriſtians ſhall die obſtinate in their Sins without Repentance.

By which you may judge, Sir, that the *Jews* are much more diſpoſed to receive the Spirit of Truth ſo ſoon as it ſhould be communicated to them, than the Chriſtians who oppoſe the known Truth. They know that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God and that he is in the Sacrament of the Altar, and thy ſhew him leſs Reſpect than a Servant would do to the meaneſt Maſter, and eat and ſwallow him as a Piece of Bread.

How would you have theſe Perſons to be reformed, ſince they would reform all the World, looking on themſelves as Gods of the Earth, and Children of the true God, while

(*d*) 1 *Pet.* 2. 20,--- 24. (*e*) *Zach.* 12. 10,---14.

they

they are led by the Devil? This they will not acknowledge, chuſing rather to periſh in their Darkneſs, than to give ear to the Truth: whereas thoſe *Jews* would gladly hear what will enlighten them, and would be bettered by knowing the Truth: For many good Spirits among them aſpire after it, (*f*) *hungring and thirſting after Righteouſneſs*, which when they ſee and know, they will immediately embrace it; becauſe nothing but Ignorance hinders them from reſigning themſelves wholly to God: Whereas the Chriſtians thro' pure Obſtinacy in their Sins, will not do it: So that if I ſhould go to the College of Cardinals at *Rome*, and tell them that I come from God to advertiſe them that they are not true Chriſtians, and that Jeſus Chriſt taught another way of living, than what they obſerve, and that to be ſaved, we muſt of Neceſſity follow Jeſus, they would preſently ſeize on me as a Criminal, and put me to death, if I would not retract my Words, tho' they knew well enough they were true; even tho' they ſhould evidently perceive that I had the holy Spirit, they would oppoſe this Truth, that they might maintain their Errours. How then, Sir would you have ſuch Perſons to be converted?

God will never force any body, having given to all Men their Free-Will, to uſe it according as they pleaſe. If theſe Chriſtians will acknowledge no other God but their own Authority, they would deal hardly with God himſelf if he ſhou'd come to ſpeak againſt it. How cou'd God in Juſtice reform theſe Chriſtians, who will not be reformed, loving rather to periſh in their Blindneſs, than to receive the Light, and this of their deliberate Will? Whereas thoſe *Jews* are ſtill looking for and aſpiring after the Coming of their Saviour in Glory: Tho' in many things they err, Nevertheleſs they perſevere in this Hope which will infallibly come to paſs (*g*) to them, provided they (*h*) acknowledge the Fault they committed in putting Jeſus Chriſt to Death.

I ask'd her, *Whether there was any Sect or Nation more capable of receiving the Truth, than the* Jews, *who were a People rejected by all Nations, and deſpiſed by every body, as unworthy of the Converſation of all good Men?*

(*f*) *Jer.* 31. 25. (*g*) *Rom,* 11. 26. *Rev.* 1. 7. (*h*) *Hoſ.* 5. 15.

She ſaid ; Sir, I know not preciſely what the *Jews* are ; but as a Friend I can tell you, that they are yet the People who love God more than any other. Their being rejected and deſpiſed by every body, ſhall perhaps ſerve for a Satisfaction to God for the Sins which they committed in putting him to death : Becauſe this is God's Way, (*k*) to chuſe always the Things that are moſt vile and moſt contemned by the World. I do not at all doubt but the *Jews* will be the firſt in the Kingdom of Heaven ; becauſe they have been ſo humbled and deſpiſed in this World ; in which they have imitated Jeſus Chriſt more than the Chriſtians ; who honour themſelves more than God, and every one eſteems them as the People of God . and Jeſus Chriſt has told us by the Mouth of his Mother, (*m*) *that he will put down the Mighty from their Seats, and will exalt the Humble.* This makes me believe that this People of the *Jews*, ſo humbled through all the World, ſhall be exalted, (*n*) above all others ; and that the *Roman* Church which is placed in the higheſt Chair on Earth (*o*) ſhall be caſt down from all her Power : Becauſe God has ſaid (*p*) *that he who exalts himſelf, ſhall be abaſed ; and he who humbles himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* It muſt needs be, Sir, that all the Words of God be fulfilled in all Reſpects. The *Jews* having been the moſt humbled People among Men, (*r*) ought to be according to the Juſtice and Truth of God, the moſt Exalted, as it ſhall (*s*) come to paſs. For as ſoon as they ſhall receive the Truth which I commit to you, they ſhall be converted, (*t*) and receive the Holy Spirit, by whom they ſhall diſcover all things, ſee their Errors and the Truth, and embracing it, ſhall arrive at the Time ſo, often deſired by them, in which (*u*) they will ſee the true Meſſiah and Saviour of the World come in Glory, who (*x*) will receive them into his Kingdom ; from whence the Children of it (*y*) ſhall be ſhut out. Theſe are the Chriſtians who ſhall never taſte of his (*z*) Feaſt, tho' they were invited and

(*i*) *Iſa.* 27. 9. 40. 2. (*k*) 1 *Cor.* 1. 27, 28. (*l*) *Zach.* 8. 23. *Rev.* 7. 4. 14. 4. (*m*) *Luke* 1. 52. (*n*) *Iſa.* 62. 2, 3. (*o*) *Iſ.* 47. *Rev.* 18. (*p*) *Luke* 14. 11. (*r*) *Iſa.* 60. 14, 15, 16. (*s*) *Iſa.* 49. 23. 54. 11, &c. *Jer.* 31. 17. (*t*) *Iſa.* 53. 11. *Hoſ.* 6. 3. (*u*) *Iſa.* 66. 5, *and* 18. (*x*) *Iſa.* 40. 9, 10, 11. (*y*) *Luke* 12. 28. (*z*) *Luke* 14. 24.

called

called unto it: But the *Jews* and Heathens ſhall ſit down there, and the Chriſtians ſhall be thruſt out; becauſe they would not obey God's Call; who having called them to Chriſtianity, they would not conform themſelves unto it: Therefore they ſhall never taſte of his Dainties; becauſe this is the laſt Mercy of God, who will bring to his Table the Sick rather than the Whole, who reſiſt his Will, as the Chriſtians do now.

I ask'd her, *If I might declare to the* Jews *all the things ſhe had told me, as coming from God by a Prophetical Spirit?*

She ſaid; Sir, I am not Prophetical as the Ancient Prophets were, who ſpoke of very obſcure things: So that many times, neither *(a)* the People, nor *(b)* they themſelves underſtood well what they ſignified; becauſe the Time was not yet come to give the full Underſtanding of them: But at preſent, in this Fulneſs of Time, God declares his Secrets very manifeſtly, that every one may underſtand them: So that you muſt not ſay, Sir, that you are ſent in the Name of ſome Prophet: becauſe the Things that I have told you, are ſuch plain and lively Truths, that no body of a good Judgment can doubt, but the Holy Spirit muſt have inſpired them: For if they believe that God is Truth, my Words are ſo ſenſibly inſeparable from it, that all Nations, both great and ſmall, muſt confeſs, that in all my Diſcourſes, the Truth is in its Source: And this Truth being *(d)* God; it is therefore God aſſuredly, who declares theſe Truths: For the Devil is the Father of Lyes, and Nature finds out ſtill Excuſes, either in its own Sins, or in thoſe it loves. By which you may ſee evidently, that Truth comes immediately from God, tho' it ſhou'd come out of an Aſs *(e)* as once it did. Therefore you need not ſo much ſtay to judge whether I have the Spirit of Propheſie, as you ought to examine very narrowly whether I ſpeak the Truth: For that is always God. The Propheſies of the Ancient Prophets, will all of them very ſhortly be fulfilled. There is no Need of any longer having obſcure Propheſies; becauſe we are fallen into the laſt Times, wherein *(e)* all the

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(a) Jer. 30. 24. *(b) Dan.* 12. 8. *(c)* 1. *John* 5. 6. *(d)* 2 *Pet.* 2. 16. *(e)* 1 *Cor.* 13. 8.

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Propheſies ſhall ceaſe, and we ſhall ſee them all entirely accompliſhed, and we ſhall not receive any more new ones: Becauſe the King of all the Prophets will himſelf govern his People, and will give an entire Accompliſhment to all that has been propheſied of him. So that, Sir you ſhall not need to ſay, that you hold theſe Truths from a Prophet; becauſe the Work does always bear Witneſs who its Workman has been. Even ſo when the Truth is lively declared, it gives ſufficient Evidence by what Maſter it is formed. I cannot conceal that I derive all my Wiſdom from God; becauſe I never learned any thing from Men: But there is no Need to ſay that I have a Prophetick Spirit, when God gives Reaſons and Compariſons to explain it after the Manner of Men.

I ſaid to her; *That in many of her Diſcourſes ſhe ſpoke of the Future, and of the Time to come, and that as to thoſe, we could not know yet, whether they were true or not.*

She ſaid; Sir, what is to come, is as true as what I have already experienced. Receive all with Humility of Heart, and you ſhall ſee in its Time as clear as the Sun, that all ſhall be accompliſhed: For God cannot lye. The holy Scriptures muſt ſay the ſame things that I ſay: Becauſe all proceeds from one and the ſame Spirit, and the *Jews* will underſtand me yet better than you do, becauſe they are more vers'd in the holy Scriptures. I think if I ſpoke to them, their Hearts would be over-joy'd and raviſh'd with Pleaſure, to know that ſo great a Happineſs is to befal them, as to become the People of God, and to ſuffer for his Love, till they ſhall ſee him come in Glory, with his Angels, to render to every one according to his Works. The Chriſtians have this in their Creed; which contains the twelve Articles of Faith, *that Jeſus Chriſt who is aſcended into Heaven, ſhall come again to judge the Quick and the Dead*: And notwithſtanding they will not believe it, tho' they ſay it daily: Or, they imagine that this Coming ſhall be ſo ſuddenly, as if the Judgment were to be by Way of Enchantment, and that it were to paſs in an Inſtant, or in one Day. Theſe are fooliſh Speculations: For the Judgment is already begun, and I know not how many Years it ſhall laſt; only at the End (*f*) Jeſus Chriſt ſhall appear upon the Earth in Glory and

(*f*) *Matth*, 24. 30.

Majeſty, and ſo ſhall (*g*) converſe with Men, who ſhall be all made happy with his glorious Preſence, which ſhall fill them with Glory, and ſhall wipe away all their Tears and Griefs to bring them into Joy that ſhall never end. They who will not believe this, are Enemies of their own Good: becauſe there is nothing in the World that can give them (*h*) more Conſtancy to ſuffer, than the Hopes they have, that in the End they ſhall ſee the glorious Coming of Jeſus Chriſt upon Earth. All ſorts of Conſolations are comprehended in this.

I ſaid to her, *That the* Jews *look for the Coming of their Meſſias in Glory, that he would come to reign and abide with them: but that the Chriſtians look'd for him only to come and judge the World, and to go away again, carrying along with him all the Bleſſed.*

She ſaid; Sir, the *Jews* ſhall not be diſappointed of their Expectation: They ſhall ſee their *Meſſiah* in Glory, (*i*) who will govern them upon Earth, converſing, eating and drinking with them: For he himſelf ſays, *that* (*k*) *he will make his Friends ſit down at his Table; and that he will riſe up and ſerve them*; now in this Paradiſe, which the Chriſtians imagine, there ſhall be no need of ſitting at a Table, nor eating nor being ſerved: And alſo when Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to his Diſciples (*l*) *that he would drink no more of the Fruit of the Vine, till he drank it new in the Kingdom of his Father*; he means certainly of the Earth; which ſhall be the Kingdom that God will give to the Body of Jeſus Chriſt: Becauſe in the Divine Kingdom, there can be no Planting of Vines nor making of Preſſes to drink Wine there. Truly, Sir, the Chriſtians are ſuperſtitious in many things, and they judge raſhly of all that they do not comprehend. They may clearly ſee by the holy Scriptures that Jeſus Chriſt ſhall have a glorious Reign, and that he (*m*) will be the Reſtorer of all things, and alſo the Saviour of Men; Becauſe all (*n*) the Prophets with the Apoſtles and other Saints have ſufficiently ſpoken of theſe things which ſhall certainly come to paſs: For the Scripture cannot err or fail: But becauſe they have not re-

(*g*) *Rev.* 12. 13. (*h*) *Rom.* 8. 18. 2 *Theſ.* 1. 5. (*i*) *Ezech.* 34. 23, 24. (*k*) *Luke* 12. 37. (*l*) *Matth.* 26. 29. (*m*) *Rev.* 21. 25. (*n*) *Acts* 3. 21.

ceived

received the compleat Knowledge of them to explain all, the Chriſtians Fancy in their Speculations, that this ſhall come to paſs in a divine and incomprehenſible Paradiſe without reflecting that the divine Kingdom cou'd not be promiſed to Jeſus Chriſt; becauſe as God, he always poſſeſs'd it, and has no need of being promiſed what he poſſeſſes: For Poſſeſſion is always greater than Promiſe; for that is wholly accompliſhed by Poſſeſſion. Therefore the Promiſe of Jeſus Chriſt muſt be on Earth; where he ſhall reign (o) over all Men, ſhall ſave them, and re-eſtabliſh all things; becauſe in the divine Heaven there is nothing to be re-eſtabliſhed: For nothing was ever ſpoiled there: Nor any to be ſaved; becauſe all that are there, have Salvation; and whither, can they imagine that God ſhou'd carry the Bleſſed with him, ſince he comprehends all things, and cannot be contain'd by any thing? They ſpeak of God, as if he had a Cloſet ſomewhere for his Retirement.

I ſaid to her; *That the* Jews *had look'd a long time for the* Meſſias; *but that the Chriſtians did not expect him till the Day of Judgment and the Reſurrection of the Dead.*

She ſaid; Sir, the *Jews* have done well always to wait for their *Meſſiah*: For a Thing is then more loved when it is long deſired. It is a conſtant Faith that makes them perſevere in this Expectation, which ſhall be recompenſed with a great Joy, when they ſhall receive the Fruit of their Hope: For it is not vain, but very well founded on all the Holy Scriptures; which is the moſt ſolid Foundation in the whole World, ſince it is the Word of an *all-wiſe*, *all-good* and *all-mighty* God: But when the Chriſtians look for their Saviour only on a certain Day, (p) they are not ſo diligent to prepare for his Coming, which they imagine to be yet far from them. They confound divers things together, which have no Relation to one another; and they make but one Day of the Plagues, the Judgment, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Glory; as if all theſe things were to be done together: But they are greatly deceived. (q) *we have not a God of Confuſion*, who ſurpriſes Perſons

(o) *Pſal.* 2. 8. *Pſal.* 22. 29. 71. 8. *Zach.* 14. 9. (p) *Luke* 12. 45, 46. (q) 1 *Cor.* 14. 33.

at unawares, confounding them by precipitating things: On the contrary, all his Ways are ſo well regulated and ordered, that there is not a Devil in Hell that cou'd ſay in truth that God gave him the leaſt Surprize, or that he could find in all his Works the leaſt Injuſtice or Want of Goodneſs and Truth. This being ſo, how cou'd it be that God ſhou'd ſend all his Plagues in one Day, that no body might have Leiſure to be converted, being ſurpriſed ſo ſuddenly with ſo many different Evils as to be chaſtiſed, judged, raiſed again, ſaved or damned all in one Day? If God has been juſt, good and true from all Eternity, wou'd he become impious at the laſt Day? This cannot be: But Men miſtake him, and every one judges of him according to their Fancy: For if they wou'd judge uprightly, they wou'd not dare to ſay that God cou'd ſurpriſe Men to judge and chaſtize them ſo ſuddenly. I wou'd gladly ask Chriſtians, where they find it Written, how long the Judgment ſhall laſt?

I ſaid to her; *That no body had diſtinguiſhed theſe Times, and that all Chriſtians believed that the Judgment, the Chaſtiſement, the Reſurrection of the Dead and the Coming of Jeſus in Glory, were but one and the ſame thing, and that they ſhould come to paſs all together.*

She ſaid; Sir, They are very much deceived: For theſe are all divers things which muſt come to paſs at different Times: For firſt of all the Judgment is, when God ſaw the univerſal Iniquity of all the Men of the World, and that not ſo much as one knew and lov'd him; he by ſtreight Juſtice judged and condemned the World: And that he might not ſurpriſe any, (*r*) he delays the Execution of his Sentence, that Men might diſcover by Experience that the World is judged, ſeeing the Evils to encreaſe, and Peoples Amendment deſperate. This is the greateſt Evidence to verifie that the Sentence is irrevocable. God does this, that Men remarking theſe Truths, may quake for Fear, and be converted unto him, that they may obtain his Mercy, at leaſt every one for their own particular. I believe, Sir, that theſe thirty Years the World is judged and condemned; and that now the Time is come to put this Sentence in Execution. It will begin (*s*) with the Plague

(*r*) 2 *Pet.* 3. 9. (*s*) 4 *Eſdr.* 16. 18, &c. *Matth.* 24. 8.

of

of War, and then that of Peſtilence, and after of Famine, that there may be time given to all Men of good Will to repent, and to take theſe Plagues in Penitence for their Sins, and by theſe Sufferings to find a Way to return to God with all their Heart and to riſe from Death to Life, that is to ſay, from Sin to Grace, as the *Jews* ſhall do by being converted firſt of all, that the Lord may find (*t*) them watching at his Coming, and may ſay to them, (*u*) *Well done good and faithful Servant; becauſe thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will ſet thee over great things: Enter into the Joy of thy Lord*: Which Joy ſhall be recovered at the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Glory, who will overthrow (*x*) all Evil by the Brightneſs of his Coming, which ſhall be ſeen and underſtood by all the Men who ſhall then be remaining on the Earth. Thus it is that God orders theſe laſt things (*y*) with Weight and Meaſure, that he may ſtill exerciſe his Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Truth, even to the End of the World, waiting ſtill for Sinners to Repentance, being deſirous (*z*) that they ſhou'd be converted and live. Whatever Men ſay, God will never depart from his eternal Qualities, and will not confound his laſt Works no more than he did his firſt: For he continues ſtill firm and conſtant in all his works. If Men will not know this, tis their own Fault, and the Effect of the ſtraying of their Minds: Nevertheleſs it is time to open their Eyes: For the Plagues are begun.

I ſaid to her; *That the* Jews *were wilfully obſtinate not to believe that Jeſus Chriſt was God, which the Chriſtians did believe aſſuredly; and conſequently they were nearer to be converted than the* Jews.

She ſaid; Sir, the *Jews* are leſs obſtinate than the Chriſtians; becauſe there is more Ground for their Unbelief than for that of the Chriſtians, who reject the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Glory, tho' it be verified by all the Holy Prophets, the Apoſtles and Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who in ſo many divers Places declare his glorious Coming, and very few ſpeak of his Coming in Reproach. This makes the *Jews* doubtful, knowing that God never ſurpriſes any; but often

(*t*) *Iſa.* 62. 6. (*u*) *Matth.* 25. 21. (*x*) *Pſalm* 97. 3, 4. *Zach.* 14. 4, 5. *Rev.* 1. 7. (*y*) *Wiſd.* 11. 20. (*z*) *Ezech.* 33. 11.

foretells the things that muſt come to paſs; and they finding ſo frequently in the Holy Scripture the Propheſie of his Coming in Glory, and ſo ſeldom his Coming in Reproach, they have ſome fundamental Reaſons, for which they cannot believe his Coming in Reproach: But ſo ſoon as the Truth ſhall come to enlighten them, they will yield to it; becauſe they love it: Whereas the Chriſtians do formally reſiſt it, and wilfully impugn it, and will not believe what they read ſo often, nor hearken to the Light that is offered them thereupon; being deſirous to continue obſtinately in the Perſuaſions in which they have been trained, and blindly to believe the Sentiments of Mens preferring them to the Truth of God. So that the *Jews* will ſooner believe that Jeſus Chriſt is God, than the Chriſtians will believe that the ſame Jeſus Chriſt ſhall come to reign in Glory upon Earth, tho this Coming be much more to be deſired and valued than that Coming in Sufferings and Reproaches: For he who highly eſteems God, will be troubled to believe or ſee he ſhou'd be abaſed or deſpiſed, and become the Reproach of Men, he who deſerves all Honours in Heaven and Earth. Hereby the *Jews* have more humane Ground not to believe the Coming of Jeſus Chriſt in Sufferings, than the Chriſtians have not to believe his Coming in Glory, which is more honourable, pleaſant and deſirable, tho' the *Jews* as well as the Chriſtians do very ill not to believe both the Comings of Jeſus Chriſt, which are equally true, both the one and the other.

I ſaid to her; *That ſhe ſeem'd to hold the* Jews *Part more than the Chriſtians.*

She ſaid; Pardon me, Sir, I am not partial; and if I were, I wou'd rather take the Chriſtians Part, among whom I am born, than that of the *Jews* whom I never ſaw. I hold only the Part of Truth, without leaning to any Side; becauſe I have no Pretenſions upon Earth: Neither *Jews* nor Chriſtians will give me any thing: But God will judge me in Truth and Righteouſneſs: Therefore I will always obſerve it without Reſpect to any body. If I knew not that the *Jews* are more diſpoſed to receive the Truth than the Chriſtians, I wou'd not ſpeak to their Advantage: But I cannot conceal the Truth, when it is asked me. If you addreſs theſe *Jews*, you will find my Saying true: For I know nothing of my ſelf:

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All comes from a Source from whence no Lye can be drawn. I am not enclined for the *Jews*, nor for any other Sect in the World: For I know none of them that are well pleaſing to God: But I love thoſe beſt that are moſt diſpoſed to receive the Truth, and to be converted unto God, and I remark this People of the *Jews* to be more diſpoſed for this than any other: Which, in Truſt, I declare to you: Not that I may be lov'd or deſpiſed; but that I may ſimply declare the Truth as I know it. Make a Trial of it, Sir, and of all the other Things which I have told you, you will find them in their Time, all true: For I am not for telling things that are extravagant, or without Neceſſity. You will have Need after this, to know all that I have declared unto you. They will be very profitable for you, and for thoſe whom you ſhall judge capable of receiving them. Doubt nothing of them. Conceive and digeſt them all. You ſhall receive from them great Light in your Underſtanding, and Strength, and Nouriſhment to your Soul, and you ſhall ſtill enter farther into the Knowledge of God and of your ſelf, which ſhall be an Everlaſting Happineſs for you. Beware of being tempted to believe the Contrary: Becauſe the Devil will ſurprize you with falſe Appearances under a Pretext of ſcrupulous Piety and Juſtice.

The Eighteenth Conference.

How the Holy Spirit gives his Light to the Soul.

I Said to her; *That I would not doubt of her Words; becauſe I believed that they all came from the Holy Spirit.*

She ſaid; Softly, Sir, all my Words come not from the Holy Spirit: For he does not dictate to me all the Words that I muſt pronounce; but the Subſtance of all that I ſay; becauſe I would never ſpeak otherwiſe than by his Motion; and no other Diſcourſes are neceſſary for me: For I have no Deſire to pleaſe any; and all that makes not for the Glory of God, ſeems to me a ſuperfluous and uſeleſs Thing. Therefore I do not willingly utter any Diſcourſe but theſe to which the Holy Spirit moves me: But he does not dictate to me all my Words. I have Need to expreſs my ſelf by Humane Reaſons or Compariſons; becauſe otherwiſe they could not underſtand me: For the Holy Spirit ſpeaks ſo ſuccinctly, that one Word makes me comprehend many things. He gives Subtilty to the Underſtanding to conceive great Things by one of his ſmall Motions. It is juſt as if one were in a fine Room, well adorned with divers Furnitures and Rarities: But there were no Light in it whereby to ſee all theſe things. In ſuch a Caſe it wou'd require a great many Words, to make him who had never ſeen them, underſtand in particular all the fine things and Furniture that were in the Room, telling him here are ſuch and ſuch Pictures, ſuch Tables, ſuch Seats, and ſuch like Things; and yet we could not make him comprehend well the Beauty of this Furniture and Rarities: But if a Light were brought into the Room, tho it were but that of a Candle, in a Moment it would give more Knowledge of all the Things that are in the Room, than

than all the Diſcourſes that were uttered to make them known. So it is with the Light of the Holy Spirit when it enters into a Soul, it makes it know and comprehend all things very clearly: Nevertheleſs theſe things cannot be ſeen by Souls who are yet in the Darkneſs and Obſcurity of their own Paſſions; Many Words and Diſcourſes muſt be uſed to make them underſtand the Rarities that are in the Works of God. It is thus, Sir, that I tell you all my Words do not come immediately from the Holy Spirit: But indeed all the Subſtance of what I ſay; Becauſe I never had any other Maſter, nor any other Study, but that of purging my Soul from Earthly Affections. By this I received the Light of all the things of which I have ſpoken to you with many more, which nevertheleſs I could not make you underſtand, but by Words and Diſcourſes, accommodated to your Capacity, which are not all preciſely endited by the Holy Spirit Word for Word, except that in general they are produced by the Gift of Wiſdom, which (*a*) the Holy Spirit always brings along with him into the Soul where he reſides, giving it the Skill to expreſs it ſelf, and to make Divine Things be underſtood by thoſe who are in Darkneſs. Therefore, Sir, you are not deceived in believing that my Words come from the Holy Spirit: For it is true, if you take them in Subſtance: But if you would maintain a preciſe enditing of Words, the Enemies of the Truth might ſurprize you in ſome Terms not well expreſs'd, or ſome Word of a contrary Signification, or other Faults of my Language, which come from my Weakneſs or Ignorance: For the Holy Spirit can commit no Faults. He always gives his Light perfect and compleat to the Soul that is purified from it ſelf: But he does not always give preciſe Words and Terms to make it be underſtood by others; becauſe it does not remain always preciſely hearkning to the Enditing of the Holy Spirit, being often diſtracted by Earthly Objects, which divert it ſometimes without its being aware; and in this Diverſion it may commit many Faults, even tho' it had received the Holy

(*a*) *Iſa.* 11. 2.

Spirit

Spirit. For this Cauſe our Life is always dangerous, and we ought (*b*) ſtill to watch that we be not ſurprized by our Enemies.

I asked her, *How ſhe could ſee by the Light of the Holy Spirit, things which conſiſt in Matter of Fact, as the Deportment of the* Jews, *and Chriſtians, and others?*

She ſaid; Sir, this is manifeſted to my Underſtanding even as Divine Things are, without any Diſtinction, except that the Soul receives more Contentment in conceiving and underſtanding the Things of God, than thoſe which reſpect Men; tho' all come from the ſame Source, nevertheleſs they have different Effects: For when God ſhews to the Soul his ſtraight *Righteouſneſs*, his univerſal *Goodneſs*, his pure *Truth*; it is filled with Wiſdom and ſolid Vertue by thoſe which it remarks in God; and when he makes it ſee his *Glory*, *Majeſty*, and his *Almighty Power*, the Soul is filled with Joy, Honour and Strength, in Conſideration of the Qualities of its God; But he no ſooner makes appear to it the deplorable State to which Men are reduced now, than the Soul is afflicted, and thirſts with a Deſire to ſee them converted unto God, who alſo ſhews unto it all the neceſſary Means for this Converſion. And as a Phyſician cannot rightly cure a ſick Perſon or Patient, without ſeeing firſt the Cauſe of the Diſeaſe, or laying open the Sores of his Evil; even ſo does God towards a charitable Soul, that is touched with a ſenſible Regret to ſee its Neighbour periſh, and with a Deſire to ſuccour him with all its Power. Then God makes it ſee the Sores, that is, the Faults and Sins of his People more diſtinctly than if it converſed daily with them, even though it has never ſeen them by the Eyes of the Body. Nevertheleſs it knows them better than they who converſe daily with them; Becauſe the Light of God pierces to the Bottom of Souls; and the Sight of Men perceives only outward things. Therefore many are often deceived, and take what is falſe for true: But God judges always with an upright Judgment: And when the Soul has Bowels of Charity to help its Neighbour, God ſhews it the State in which he lives, and alſo the Means by which he may riſe again from his Fall. This

(*b*) 1 *Pet.* 5. 8.

is

is the Reaſon why God makes Matters of Fact, which reſpect our Neighbour, to be as well perceived as divine Things, and that by the Light of the Holy Spirit, which is ſo much the brighter the farther it is removed from Humane Light and Natural Knowledge. For this Cauſe, Sir, I retire ſo much from Men, and will learn nothing from them; becauſe their Wiſdom hinders and obſcures the Light of the Holy Spirit; and according as I am removed from them, accordingly I approach to true Knowledge: For ſometimes I wou'd tell you better what paſſes among the *Turks* or other remote Places, than what is done in my Preſence: For my Eyes may deceive me: But the Holy Spirit cannot deceive me.

I asked her, *How this Light had its Original? If the Holy Spirit did immediately declare things to the Soul, or if the Soul did propoſe them firſt?*

She ſaid; Sir, this is done differently: For ſometimes the Holy Spirit gives Notices of the Things which the Soul never ſaw nor thought of: At other times he makes it underſtand ſomething which it ſaw or underſtood imperfectly: But for the moſt Part, the Light is demanded by the Soul when it prays for it or for ſomewhat elſe: Then if it be well recollected, it receives the Underſtanding of what it asked, either God grants it, or makes it ſee wherefore he denies it, or elſe what it ought to do or forſake to co-operate with the Deſigns of God, and to obtain its Requeſt. Behold how the Lights of the Holy Spirit have their Riſe. All that is needful in this, is (*c*) to diſengage our Soul from Earthly Affections, and to reſign it to the Will of God; Then he governs and illuminates it in ſuch ſort as that it cannot be ignorant of any thing that it ought to know: For as for ſimple Curioſities, we ought never to ask or deſire them; but only that which is well pleaſing unto God, or profitable to our Neighbour: The Knowledge of which Things God does not deny to Souls who are faithfully dedicated to him. I wiſh, Sir, you may be one of them, that you may learn in a Moment more things in theſe Matters, than I cou'd tell you in a whole Day: For one Word from God contains more than Ten Thouſand Diſcourſes of Men, which are ſtill accompanied

(*c*) *Pſ.* 73. 23,—28.

with

with many Defects and Imperfections : Whereas the Holy Spirit has a perfect Accompliſhment in every Thing, and enlarges himſelf according as the Soul is emptied of it ſelf. We have nothing elſe to do, but to empty our ſelves; becauſe God being always in the Center of our Soul, he wou'd enlighten it abundantly in caſe the Hindrances were removed : For take them away and we receive Light.

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